Daily Report

Near East & South Asia

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FBIS-NES-96-101 *23 May 1996*

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Inter-Arab Affairs

Inter-Arab: Arab League Concerned Over Turkish-Israeli Maneuvers

NC2305070096 Cairo MENA in Arabic 2050 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 22 May (MENA) — The Arab League has conveyed to Turkey its deep concern over the grave developments in light of reports that the implementation of the Turkish-Israeli military agreement will start with exercises intended to be held near the borders with Syria, Iraq, and Iran.

This came at a meeting that took place today [22 May] between Ambassador Muwaffaq al-'Allaf, assistant Arab League secretary general for political affairs, and the Turkish ambassador in Cairo, Yasar Yakis.

Al-'Allaf said: We told the Turkish side of the Arab concern over the Turkish-Israeli land and sea exercises that reports say will start in July in implementation of the recently concluded military agreement between those two countries.

He noted that he had examined Arab and regional issues and events with the Turkish ambassador.

Palestinian Affairs

Palestinian Affairs: 'Arafat on Hamas, Libyan Expulsions, Taba Talks

NC2305101596 Cairo MENA in Arabic 0530 GMT 23 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat has stated that the current dialogue between Israel and Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] is an old and continuous one.

It was the Israeli administration that established Hamas, to rival the PLO, he said. He noted that the Hamas-Israel dialogue began when Yitzhaq Shamir was a prime minister and Yitzhaq Rabin a defense minister.

In a statement to AL-AHRAM published today, 'Arafat said Hamas' suicide operations against the Israelis are agreed upon between Israeli extremists and Palestinian and Arab extremists.

He noted an announcement by Amsher Veer [as received], leader of the Eyal movement — which assassinated former Israeli Prime Minister Rabin — that "we deal with Hamas and the Islamic Jihad to undermine the peace process. [as received]

'Arafat said he cannot stop the dialogue between Israel and Hamas, but he expressed his belief that the dialogue should be conducted through the Palestinian Authority [PA].

On the final-status negotiations that opened in Taba on 5 May, 'Arafat noted that the talks focus on main issues such as holy Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, Israeli settlements, and the final border.

On the refugees problem, he stressed the need to implement the relevant UN resolutions. He said this position was adopted by the Working Group on Refugees, which emanates from the multilateral talks on peace in the Middle East. However, he noted that Israel opposed this position.

Asked his opinion of statements by brother Colonel Mu'ammar al- Qadhdhafi, leader of the Libyan revolution, to the effect that the Palestinians must return to their country, 'Arafat said there is a difference between the return of the Palestinians and their expulsion from the Arab countries. What Colonel al-Qadhdhafi is doing is expelling the Palestinians, and the Palestinians should not be expelled, because they contributed to the building of Libya, he said.

Asked how he views visits by Israeli officials to Arab countries and whether this is in the interest of the Palestinians, 'Arafat said: These are visits they make to Arab countries. What is important is to make progress on the Palestinian track, because it is the essence and core of the problem. Progress must also be achieved on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks of the negotiations so that peace in the region can be just and comprehensive.

On Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres' visits to a number of Gulf states and whether this is good or bad for the Palestinians, 'Arafat said: "I do not want to interfere in this". He stressed that relations between the PA and the Gulf states are good.

President 'Arafat praised the results and resolutions of the recent trilateral summit in Cairo. He said the summit was a good beginning for a full Arab summit to restore Arab solidarity and a unified position.

Palestinian Affairs: 'Coordination Visit' by 'Arafat to Amman in 'Next Few Days'

TA2205134996 Jerusalem AL-NAHAR in Arabic 21 May 96 pp 1, 7

["Exclusive" report]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Amman, AL-NAHAR office — It has been learned here from a senior political official that President Yasir 'Arafat will pay a coordination visit to Jordan within the next few days. During the visit he will conclude the talks that began at the recent tripartite Cairo summit.

It has been learned that the visit's aim is to stress that the tension that dominated the Cairo meeting has

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been totally eliminated and that a stage of coordination and cooperation prevails at present. President 'Arafat's meeting with King Husayn will be in preparation for the tripartite summit that will be attended by the Egyptian president in Amman in the first week of June. The summit seeks to draw up a unified plan of action in dealing with the new leadership that the Israeli elections, slated for the end of this month, will produce. [passage omitted]

Palestinian Affairs: Officials Debate Ideas on Jerusalem

TA2205124196 Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English 22 May 96 p 5

[Report by Lamia Lahoud]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Senior Palestinian official Ahmad Quray' [Abu-'Ala'] has told THE JERUSALEM POST that Palestinians will accept that Jerusalem should remain a united city with open access for all, if Israel agrees to the principle of Palestinian sovereignty in the territories, Gaza and eastern parts of Jerusalem.

Quray', the speaker of the elected Palestinian council, was one of the chief negotiators in the secret Oslo talks and he is expected to head the Palestinian delegation to the final-status talks on Jerusalem.

He was elected to the Palestinian council in the Jerusalem area.

"We can agree on all kinds of arrangements in Jerusalem, including a joint municipality, if Israel will accept the principle of Palestinian sovereignty," he said.

He said sovereignty is the key to resolving all outstanding issues and that Jerusalem is not the most difficult of them. The most difficult issues, he said, are Palestinian refugees and the sharing of water resources.

He said since neither Israelis nor Palestinians are interested in internationalizing Jerusalem, as suggested by the United Nations, a compromise can be worked out.

Quray' said that until now all negotiations on Jerusalem have been held at unofficial levels and none of the proposals so far put forward have proved acceptable to either side. Nonetheless, he said, he would not dismiss them as mere intellectual exercises.

He said it was too early for either Israel or the Palestinians to concede any ground on Jerusalem since this would weaken their official negotiating positions.

Sari Nusaybah, a prominent east Jerusalemite who is close to Yasir 'Arafat, said the unofficial negotiations which have been in session should be taken seriously since their contents may serve as guidelines for the final-status talks.

Nusaybah is president of al-Quds University in East Jerusalem and has been writing about possible compromises. Nusaybah also talks of the necessity of keeping Jerusalem physically united, though it may be politically divided.

He said Teddy Kollek's idea of dividing Jerusalem into local self-governing councils with representatives in the municipality could be part of the solution.

He suggested that each side, Israeli and Palestinian, form a municipality to govern the affairs of the councils. There could be a joint municipality on top of the Israeli and Palestinian sub-municipalities.

This joint body would be responsible for city planning, water supplies, sewage systems and other services, while the sub-municipalities would deal with cultural matters.

He said that in Israeli areas of Jerusalem, Israeli law should apply, in Palestinian districts, Palestinian law. But Nusaybah said Israelis and Palestinians should be fully free to move around the whole city.

"We should reverse the present system. Instead of putting up checkpoints into the city, we should check people leaving it to enter Israeli or Palestinian areas."

He conceded that security control of the city would be a problem and suggests a demilitarized city — "a city of peace, I would call it."

Other suggestions have been floated such as dividing the capital into Israeli Jerusalem, Arab Jerusalem, and the Old City — which would have special status.

There each religion would be in charge of its holy shrines, in a similar arrangement to the present one. The areas of Palestinian Jerusalem would have to be negotiated.

PA [Palestinian Authority] officials say they have distanced themselves from controversial leaflets by council member Hatim 'Abd-al-Qadir, in which he called for a Palestinian struggle for Jerusalem.

'Abd-al-Qadir said he meant "a non-violent struggle." Palestinian officials said the leaflets do not represent the position of the PA, even though 'Abd-al-Qadir is himself a member of the elected council's Jerusalem committee.

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Palestinian Affairs: Shaykh Yasin 'Expected' To Urge Freeze of Hamas Attacks

TA2305084996 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0800 GMT 23 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Two Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] leaders from the Gaza Strip met yesterday with the movement's leader, Shaykh Ahmad Yasin, at the prison where the latter is incarcerated. Our correspondent Yoni Ben-Menahem learned that the three men discussed publicly calling on Hamas activists not to carry out terrorist attacks in the next few days. Shaykh Yasin is expected to make such an announcement soon.

Palestinian Affairs: Hamas Splinter Group Seeks Ministerial Post in PA Cabinet

TA2205172896 Jerusalem Israel Television Channel 1 Network in Arabic 1600 GMT 22 May 96

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Text] Members of the Islamic Path Movement [IPM], which split from Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] a few months ago, said that the IPM is seeking to join the Palestinian Authority [PA]. Our correspondent Hasan Abu-Zayid reports that the movement's commissioner general, Shaykh Mahmud Abu-Hatim Abu-Dan, has sent a letter to PA Chairman Yasir 'Arafat asking him to incorporate the IPM into the PA and appoint an IPM member as a minister in the Palestinian cabinet.

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Egypt

Egypt: Mubarak Views Relations With U.S., Syria, Others

NC2305053396 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1941 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 22 May (MENA)—President Husni Mubarak has categorically denied that there is any coolness in relations between Egypt and Syria. He noted that some people thought there was something wrong between Cairo and Damascus after the recent tripartite summit in Cairo in which King Husayn of Jordan and Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat participated. In an interview with the newspaper AL-JUMHURIYAH published on Thursday [23 May] President Mubarak said these people do not know the facts or the reasons behind the conference. The issue can be summed up thus: There was a misunderstanding between King Husayn and Yasir 'Arafat so I contacted them and asked them to sit down together and discuss things frankly to clear things up. He said the Jordanian-Palestinian misunderstanding began when some people circulated rumors about what they termed "the Jordanian option," Jordan's seeking to establish "a united kingdom" that includes the West Bank, and the annexation of part of Iraq. President Mubarak said: When I visited King Husayn in al-'Aqabah I broached the issue and frankly talked to him of these reports. King Husayn categorically denied that he had such ideas, he said.

President Mubarak reasserted that there is no coolness in relations between Egypt and Syria and that there is no "cake" to fight over or for anyone to claim the lion's share. He pointed out that he held a lengthy telephone conversation with Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad on the first day of 'Id al-Adha and discussed numerous issues. He noted that he meets with President al-Asad periodically in Egypt and Syria and that their meetings are completely frank and clear and that there is no room for lukewarm ties. He said that foreign media circulate these rumors because they want differences to arise between Egypt and Syria.

Discussing Egyptian-U.S. relations in light of the intensive contacts and visits between Egypt and Europe and Asia and whether these visits, including the recent visits to Egypt by French President Jacques Chirac and PRC President Jiang Zemin, are at the expense of relations with the United States, President Mubarak stressed that Egypt's ties with the United States remain good. He said: We differ in our views on some issues but these differences will not affect the substance of our ties. On the contrary. He noted in this regard that U.S. President Bill Clinton contacted him a few days ago and invited him to visit the United States on 5 June to discuss numerous issues that concern Egypt and the United States. He noted that he apologized for not accepting the invitation at this time, since Egypt will receive more than one Arab leader and the People's Assembly will discuss the new budget for 1996-1997. He said he agreed to visit the United States later this year at a date to be agreed upon.

President Mubarak pointed out that Egypt's relations with France and the PRC, and with Europe and Asia, do not contradict its ties with the United States. He noted that he tried persistently in the past few years to have Egypt regain its Arab status and restore warmth and vitality to ties with many countries, with which ties had been strained or cool. He stressed that it is in Egypt's interest to have close and good ties with every country. He noted that we need more investments, modern technology, and expertise from the countries that have gone ahead of us and said that achieving this goal requires good ties, understanding, cooperation, and friendship with everyone. He warned that at this time we must expect statements and rumors that aim to serve particular purposes.

Asked if the telephone talks with President Clinton touched on economic cooperation and on the activity of the Egyptian-U.S. Presidential Council of Businessmen, President Mubarak said: Naturally, we discussed several issues regarding economic cooperation at the bilateral level, particularly because one of the items on the agenda of the visit that President Clinton invited me to make is to meet with a number of senior U.S. businessmen who have expressed a desire to invest in Egypt. He said he agreed with President Clinton that Egyptian Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa should visit Washington shortly and meet with businessmen to discuss their projects and proposals and to explain to them the investment opportunities and the numerous spheres for investment available in Egypt. He noted that Dr. Usamah al-Baz, foreign ministry first under secretary and director of his office for political affairs, is currently in the United States holding discussions and exchanging views with officials there.

President Mubarak touched on reports regarding preparations for a "Turkish-Israeli-Jordanian" alliance. He said that all this is speculation that the arrival of U.S. aircraft in Jordan; the signing of a military aerial agreement between Israel and Turkey; and the strong ties between Jordan, Israel, and Turkey helped spread. He said these three pictures were linked, and that the matter is still within the context of assessments or speculations, and that they may not be true. He said we are following the issue closely and with interest. He noted that our contacts with all parties continue.

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Discussing the recent Israeli-Turkish agreement, President Mubarak pointed out that the Turkish officials told Foreign Minister Musa during his recent visit to Ankara that what was signed with Israel was not an alliance. He said: "Personally, I do not think Turkey would take such a step, because establishing an alliance with Israel means Turkey would lose the Arab World. He wondered against whom such an alliance would be established? Against Syria? He stressed that Egypt and the entire Arab World will not accept any form of aggression against Syria. He said: There are Syrian-Turkish problems and we discuss them with Turkey to reach a solution.

Discussing the peace process in the Middle East and the latest Israeli aggression against south Lebanon, President Mubarak stressed that peace is inevitable and that war is not the alternative to peace, noting that war was tried for a half century and proved its failure. He noted that the peoples of the region have been exhausted by wars and do not want to return to them or to their atmosphere. He said that we may see, now and then, difficult operations — fedayeen activities, resistance, or sabotage; and we see more violent reaction by Israel, as happened in Lebanon. He said that these actions and the reactions to them most often come from the enemies of peace. He said that peace has enemies on both the Arab and Israeli sides, because war has become a profitable business or profession. He said these forces will continue to try by all means to spoil the atmosphere, place obstacles, destroy bridges of confidence, and prompt this side to act and the other side to take revenge. He said we are all duty-bound to deny these forces the opportunity, noting that he always explains this point to the Palestinians, Israelis, and all parties. He stressed that he is confident that Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad wants peace but has his own view of the way to achieve it. He stressed that the Israeli people want peace despite what happens every now and then. He stressed that Lebanon also wants peace and has no conditions other than Israeli withdrawal from the Arab territories and from south Lebanon and that Security Council Resolution 425 be implemented.

Egypt: Mubarak Explains Reasons for Not Visiting U.S. 5 Jun

NC2205201696 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1955 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 22 May (MENA)—In an interview with AL-JUMHURIYAH published on Thursday [23 May] President Husni Mubarak has stated that he apologized for not accepting an invitation from U.S. President Bill Clinton to visit the United States on 5 June. He said he apologized for not visiting on the date proposed by Clinton because he has specific prior engagements. He noted that around this time Egypt will receive more than one Arab leader and that Egypt will discuss the new budget for 1996-1997 and submit it to the People's Assembly. He said he has agreed with President Clinton to visit the United States some time this year on a date to be agreed upon. He stressed that U.S.-Egyptian relations are good.

Egypt: 'Terrorists' Arrested; Materials Seized

NC2205153396 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1420 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 22 May (MENA) — The State Security Investigation apparatus today arrested 33 terrorists of the 37-member organization known as the Islamic Group in the governorates of Alexandria, al-Buhayrah, Marsa Matruh and Suez.

This was stated by an official source at the Ministry of Interior, who said that the apparatus is currently monitoring the moves of the fugitive members. He added that large amounts of publications and organizational papers outlining the group's thoughts and methods of action were discovered. They include the "Charter of Political Action," the "Assessment of Work Within the Group," "Why Should We Make the Sacrifice," "The Importance of the Media for the Organization," and "Let the Rulers Hear."

The security source pointed out that the organization members received instructions from their leaders in prison to plan hostile operations and set up new cells. The leaders include:

— Al-Ahmad Muhammad al-Basyuni, a teacher born in al-Minufiyah. He was associated with the defendants involved in case No. 791/89 Supreme State Security;

— Rif'at Muhammad Hasan, born in 1959, a graduate of the Faculty of Science, Asyut University. He was charged in case No. 399/92 Supreme State Security concerning the Islamic Group organization in Alexandria; and

— Khalid Yusuf Ibrahim al-Najjar, a blacksmith born in 1968 in al-Daqahliyah. He was charged in case No. 399/92 Supreme State Security.

The source added that the security apparatus monitored the movements of terrorist leader Sa'id 'Abd-al-'Aziz Ibrahim Bakr, born in Idku in 1973. He is a student at the Faculty of Engineering at Alexandria University. He was charged in the case of the Islamic Group organization in Alexandria. This terrorist was in charge of contacts between the jailed leaders and the group members in al- Buhayrah, Marsa Matruh, and Suez.

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The source added that the defendants gave detailed confessions on how they adopted the ideology of the terrorist Islamic Group organization and joined its cells. They took part in the group's meetings and used mosques as centers for their moves and to recruit new members.

In their confessions the terrorists said the leading cadres supervised the formation of cells geographically and supplied the members with leaflets and publications. The group members received intensive training in violent sports, such as Kung Fu, in remote areas.

They also confessed that they were trained in the use of weapons and explosives to carry out their terrorist operations. They said the organization adopts the concept of legitimizing [istihlal] the killing of the well-to-do to seize their money to finance their terrorist activities.

They said there were plans to assassinate citizens in accordance with their concept of legitimizing their acts and were ready to carry out the assassinations. But their arrest precluded such a thing.

The prosecution has launched an investigation with the defendants, who have been remanded in custody for 15 days. The State Security Investigations Bureau and the competent authorities are monitoring the moves of the remaining members still at large.

Morocco

Morocco: Fundamentalist Movement Abandons 'Revolutionary Option'

LD2205140896 Rabat MAP in English 1339 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Rabat, May 22 (MAP) — The leader of the Moroccan fundamentalist association "Al Jamaa Al Islamiya" Abdelilah Benkirane has deemed the monarchy regime a necessity for Morocco and said this regime draws its legitimacy from Islam.

In an interview published Tuesday by the "QUOTIDIEN DU MAROC" daily, Benkirane said his association has completely abandoned "the seventies and early eighties revolutionary option" and is now wishing to work within the framework of the monarchy's institutions.

"For us, Morocco needs its monarchy regime because it is provided with Islamic legitimacy", he told the newspaper adding that this regime "plays an arbitrating role, has unified Moroccans and is the cement of national unity".

Asked about the relationship between his association and authorities, Benkirane said "in the last ten years, we have not been bothered". "The state tolerates us" because "the Moroccan regime is reasonable and patient" and because "it would not be reasonable to reprimand Moslems who do nothing wrong except propagate the divine word".

The association's motto is "Islam, Constitutional Monarchy and Non-Violence", said Benkirane, 42, a graduate in physical sciences and former professor at "L'ecole Normale Superieure" in Rabat, a teachers' training school.

Morocco: Student Demonstrations Reported in Rabat

LD2205124696 Paris Radio France International in French 0730 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] They are diploma-holders and unemployed. In Morocco, 1,400 people have been occupying the premises of a union since Monday [20 May] evening. They have also staged demonstrations in Rabat. Mona el Banna reports from Rabat:

[El Banna] At 1630 hours on Avenue Jean Jaures, dozens of unemployed diploma-holders are on the roof of the headquarters of the UMP, the Moroccan Labor Union, in the center of Rabat. These men and women chant: Enough, enough with false promises, and they make the V-sign. They say: No to the siege, yes to freedom. Downstairs, the building is surrounded with riot police vans. Police forces holding helmets prevent anybody from entering or leaving the building. Police officers ask passers-by to move on. The identity of journalists is checked.

The demonstrators, who have come from all the regions of Morocco, belong to 67 regional associations. Djemal el-Addad is the deputy secretary general of the association of unemployed diploma-holders in Morocco:

[Begin el-Addad recording] We have staged a sit-in because the government has made false promises. Furthermore, the budget makes provision for only 9,000 budget posts, while there are more than 2,500 unemployed diploma-holders [figures as heard]. Moreover, we have inmates who are in jail, and we demand their release. [end recording]

[El Banna] The demonstrators have decided to stage a 36-hour hunger strike at 1000 hours today. It may be prolonged. A march is also scheduled for Friday outside the Parliament headquarters.

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Tunisia

Tunisia: Saudi-Tunisian Joint Committee Holds Cooperation Talks

LD2205210096 Riyadh SPA in Arabic
1712 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Tunis, 22 May — The joint Saudi- Tunisian Committee began its fifth session meetings in Tunis today. The Saudi delegation to these meetings is headed by Minister of Trade Usamah Bin-Ja'far Faqih and the Tunisian side is headed by Minister of International Cooperation and Foreign Investment Mohamed Ghannouchi. [passage omitted]

Ghannouchi said that trade had developed as overall trade volume has increased from 33 million [Tunisian] dinars in 1992 to 57 million in 1995. [passage omitted]

In the process of his talk about the processes of economic cooperation between the two countries, his excellency the Saudi trade minister dealt with the achievements of the Saudi-Tunisian company for developmental investment which has become a lofty monument and an example to be followed on the road of economic cooperation between sisterly countries — thanks to the support which it enjoys in the two countries and the efforts of the company's alert administration. He said that "this company has managed to go forward in implementing the goals for which it was established and contributed toward constructing and executing a large number of productive investment projects, the number of which reached 310 at the end of 1995 to the value of 380 million Tunisian dinars, including 103 projects in the industrial sector, 63 in the agricultural and fishing sector, and 144 in the tourism and services sector. The number of projects which have entered the production phase has reached 218 projects.

He referred to the company's success in attracting private investments from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the creation of numerous specialized subsidiary companies in Tunisia to the extent that present Saudi investments have exceeded $500 million, thereby occupying the first position in the list of foreign investments in Tunisia. [passage omitted]

His excellency was of the view that reaching a bilateral agreement on encouraging and protecting investment will strengthen the chances of increasing the investments and setting up joint projects between the two countries.

He stressed that the activities of the Saudi Development Fund and its contributions in financing development projects and programs in Tunisia over the past two decades were another example of the fruitful cooperation between the two sides.

He said: "The fund has committed itself to finance 15 projects, the execution of 11 of which has been completed, and four projects under construction [to build] a modern network of basic infrastructures in the spheres of drinking water, irrigation, sanitary drainage, dams, integrated rural development, airports, technical education, fishing, and equipping the industrial areas." [passage omitted]

As for trade between the Kingdom [of Saudi Arabia] and Tunisia the [Saudi] minister of trade said that it had increased "moderately" in some years and that at its current level is still below what it should be since it did not exceed $47 million in 1995. [passage omitted]

Then three sub-committees were set up. They will be headed by delegations from both sides. These [subcommittees] are: a committee of economic and trade cooperation; a committee of cooperation in the areas of education, information, culture and youth, and a committee for cooperation in the area of investment. [passage omitted]

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Arabian Peninsula: GCC Refining Capacity To Be Increased

LD2205190296 Kuwait KUNA in Arabic 1640 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Kuwait, 22 May — A Gulf oil official expected here today the overall refining capability of the Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC] countries to rise to 5 million barrels in the short term.

Dr. Anwar 'Abdallah, director of oil and gas at the GCC General Secretariat, said in an exclusive statement to KUNA on the sidelines of the 11th meeting of officials of GCC national oil companies, which concluded its proceedings today, that these countries have refineries which are in line with the recent developments and the scientific and technological advances in the refining industry which prompt them to plan to increase their refining capability — currently standing at three million barrels — and the production of lead-free gasoline, and to increase the proportion of light oil products for which demand is on the increase now and in the future in the international markets. [passage omitted]

Bahrain

Bahrain: Citizen Abducted in Kuwait; Security Chief Recruits in UK

LD2205185296 Tehran IRNA in English 1836 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] London, May 22, IRNA — Bahraini national, Jamil 'Abd-al-Ghani 'Abdallah 'Ali, was reported Wednesday to have been abducted from his workplace in Kuwait on May 14 and not heard of since.

According to the Bahrain Freedom Movement, his Kuwaiti wife has contacted the Kuwaiti parliament but has not yet been able to locate the whereabouts of her husband, who was said to have been driven away by two unidentified persons. Last month, another Bahraini national, 'Ali al-Mutghawi, was said to have disappeared as he attempted to cross the Saudi border into Jordan.

The Bahraini opposition group described events in Bahrain taking a new profile following security forces killing Salman al-Taytun, his wife and son and blowing up their family house in Sanabis on May 7. It reported sources close to the government indicating that the British officer in-charge of the security apparatus, Ian Henderson, had recently recruited 150 more UK officers to work for him.

The recruitment was said by the Bahrain Freedom Movement to show how deep the crisis had become in the country. Its belief was that the extra officers would only complicate the situation and not defeat the demands for the restoration of constitutional law.

Kuwait

Kuwait: Report Prepared on Arrest, Extradition of Bahraini

NC2205205196 Paris AFP in English 1751 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kuwait City, May 22 (AFP)— A parliamentary committee is preparing a report on the arrest and extradition of a Bahraini citizen which MPs say violates Kuwaiti law, an MP and human rights activist said on Wednesday [22 May].

Jamil 'Abd-al-Ghani 'Abdallah 'Ali was arrested by the Kuwaiti authorities on May 14 at the request of the Bahraini government and sent to Bahrain without any charges being announced, MP 'Adnan 'Abd- al-Samid told AFP.

"Nobody knows about (his charges). Even his relatives, his wife, they didn't know anything. He just disappeared suddenly," he said.

Interior Minister Shaykh 'Ali Sabah al-Salim said 'Abd-al-Ghani 'Abdallah 'Ali had been arrested and extradited to Bahrain for "security reasons", in response to questions raised by MPs on Tuesday.

"Even if it is for 'security reasons'...he should have an order from the courts," said Jasim al-Qatami, head of Kuwait's Society for Human Rights.

'Abd-al-Ghani 'Abdullah 'Ali's wife, a Kuwaiti citizen, and her relatives initially approached 'Abd-al-Samid for support after the arrest and he then referred them to the National Assembly (parliament) committee for human rights.

The committee is now preparing a report on the case, which will then be submitted to parliament for debate.

"It is against the law and against the constitution to arrest somebody and send him to his country or anywhere that is dangerous for him, and without any official papers or anything," 'Abd-al-Samid said.

Kuwait has until now refused to sign a security agreement that exists between other Gulf states, which allows for extradition, on the grounds that it violates the Kuwaiti constitution, he added.

'Abd-al-Ghani 'Abdullah 'Ali, aged 35, worked as a government clerk in Kuwait's department of social security for five years before his arrest.

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Kuwait: Foreign Minister on Oil-for-Food, Arab Ties

MM2305132296 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 23 May 96 pp 1,6

[Interview with Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah by Jihad al-Khazin in Kuwait on 22 May]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Al-Khazin] Let us start with a general question. What is your assessment of the current situation in the Arab world?

[Al-Sabah] I cannot say our Arab world is in good shape. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait harmed the Arab situation, and nothing new has emerged to unite the Arab homeland. The rift made every country behave as it saw fit, without consideration for whether it would harm the Arab position as a whole or not.

[Al-Khazin] Are there any differences of opinion in the [Gulf] Cooperation Council [GCC] regarding normalization with Israel?

[Al-Sabah] There are differences of opinion in the Arab world as a whole and not only in the GCC. However, peace will come. I do not believe it will take long because the door has been opened to peace, which will be completed with the agreement of the brothers in Syria and Lebanon (with Israel). Any relations with Israel will follow Syria and Lebanon. We have no borders with Israel, and our enmity toward it stems from the fact that my brother's enemy is my enemy.

[Al-Khazin] Does Kuwait play a part in the proposed economic projects?

[Al-Sabah] You mean the regional development bank?

[Al-Khazin] And the waters....

[Al-Sabah] We are not involved in these projects. Everything depends on achieving a comprehensive and just peace for our brothers in Syria and Lebanon.

[Al-Khazin] How are current relations between Kuwait and Iran, in view of the confrontation between Iran and the United States?

[Al-Sabah] Our relations with Iran are good and will remain so. It is our neighbor, and one tries to maintain good relations with one's neighbors. We have nothing to do with U.S. threats to Iran. That is another issue which we cannot discuss. However, we must be frank with our neighbor, because when it interferes in the Gulf states' internal affairs we condemn this interference. Just as we would condemn any interference in Iran, we also condemn Iran's interference in the Gulf states, because relations must be based on mutual respect and cooperation without interference. With regard to U.S. or any other threats to Iran, we hope that there will not be a clash and that the matter can be resolved amicably.

[Al-Khazin] You welcomed the "oil-for-food" agreement ratified by Iraq. Do you expect any other steps to follow, and what should Iraq do now?

[Al-Sabah] We welcomed Iraq's acceptance of the oil-for-food resolution, because we felt that the Iraqi people, like the people of Kuwait, were the Baghdad regime's victim. If this regime does not think of its people, how could others!

That is why I welcomed Iraq's acceptance of the resolution. I believe it will improve the Iraqi people's living conditions, and the picture will be different from what it is now.

However, what is required of Iraq is that it implements the Security Council resolutions. As a Kuwaiti, I say that it should provide information concerning the Kuwaiti prisoners and hostages and the Kuwaiti possessions, both civilian and military, which were looted in Kuwait.

[Al-Khazin] There were accusations that Kuwaiti Islamic associations are financing the activities of terrorist organizations abroad. Has there been any contact with the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry in this regard?

[Al-Sabah] I would like to stress that no Kuwaiti association is helping terrorist organizations. To give you an idea of the issue, I heard one day that Kuwaiti associations were helping terrorist groups in Egypt. I agreed with the Waqf minister that the heads of these associations should travel to Egypt. They did, and met with President Mubarak who kept them longer than expected. After that, Egypt was convinced that these associations are charity associations for Muslims and not for terrorism.

[Al-Khazin] How are your relations with Yemen?

[Al-Sabah] We have embassies in both Yemen and Jordan. However, there is still a strong popular reaction to Yemen's position (during the Kuwaiti war of liberation), but this issue will be resolved in due course.

[Al-Khazin] I shall ask you the same question about Jordan. I read a Kuwaiti press statement today to the effect that Jordan is to appoint a new ambassador to Kuwait.

[Al-Sabah] I can assure you that there is nothing official about this matter. I will add, however, that there are contacts with Jordan. Telephone communications have been established and mail has resumed. Many Jordanian exports have started to reach Kuwait. In the near future, God willing, the Jordanian Embassy will open in Kuwait. However, so far, there has been no contact

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in this context, but someone will come to Kuwait to open the Jordanian Embassy.

[Al-Khazin] Did they request it?

[Al-Sabah] We will request it, God willing.

[Al-Khazin] You recently met with Jordanian Prime Minister 'Abd- al-Karim al-Kabariti.

[Al-Sabah] I asked to see him the last time. 'Abd-al-Karim al- Kabariti is someone I respect very much.

[Al-Khazin] Did the Americans ask you to receive Israeli Premier Shim'on Peres, and are they still asking you to normalize with Israel?

[Al-Sabah] I would like to assure you that there was no request from the Americans or anyone else, because this is a Kuwaiti decision, and not a U.S. decision imposed on Kuwait. I believe the Americans are well aware of Kuwait's position and they have never discussed this matter.

[Al-Khazin] What is the Kuwaiti position?

[Al-Sabah] When the peace process in the region is completed, we will be ready to remove, first, the boycott, and everything else afterward. However, this will only happen after the peace with Syria and Lebanon has been achieved, and not before.

[Al-Khazin] After the recent Israeli attack on Lebanon, did Lebanon ask you for any political or economic assistance?

[Al-Sabah] We did not wait for the Lebanese brothers to contact us to ask for assistance. Aid was being sent before the aggression took place. Our position on Lebanon is a matter of principle and is the government's and people's position. We will not forget that Lebanon stood by Kuwait (during the invasion)and neither will we forget that its president spoke at the Cairo summit and was as vehement as we were, or even more so, against the invasion. That is why, as a people and government, we will not wait for a request for help.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia: Foreign Ministry Hails UN's Oil-for-Food Accord With Iraq

LD2205203196 Riyadh Saudi Arabian Television Network in Arabic 1830 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] An official source at the Foreign Ministry has stated that the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has received with great satisfaction the news of the UN secretary general concluding a memorandum of understanding with the Iraqi government that allows a serious implementation of Security Council Resolution 986 of 1994 which deals with the provision of humanitarian food and medicine needs for the Iraqi people and puts an end to their suffering.

In a statement to SPA the source said: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has strongly and persistently supported the Security Council's efforts to provide humanitarian needs for the fraternal Iraqi people and sought to speed up the implementation of the appropriate mechanism included in Security Council Resolutions 706 and 712 of 1991.

Saudi Arabia: Riyadh Governor Inaugurates New Kazakh Embassy

LD2205171996 Riyadh SPA in English 1258 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Riyadh, May 22, SPA — Prince Sattam Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, the vice-governor of Riyadh region, inaugurated here last night the Embassy of Kazakhstan in Riyadh.

Speaking on the occasion Kazakhstan's Deputy Foreign Minister Fitislav Gizatov [name as received] said opening of the embassy will positively contriubte to enhancing Saudi-Kazakhstan relations.

Gizatov hoisted the flag of his country on the building of the embassy.

The inaugural ceremony was attended by senior officials and a number of the members of the diplomatic corps in the Kingdom.

United Arab Emirates

UAE: Defense Minister Confers With PRC Vice Premier

JN2205122696 Manama WAKH in English 1600 GMT 21 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Dubayy, MAY 21 (GNA) — Dubai Crown Prince and Defence Minister General Shaykh Muhammad Bin-Rashid Al Maktum met with Chinese Vice Premier Wu Bangguo here today.

The two men reviewed bilateral relations and the latest developments in the Middle East in the light of peace process.

Wu Bangguo expressed delight over his visit to the UAE and highlighted his discussions with UAE officials in both Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

He also praised the UAE's free-trade policy, which will help boost its economic and commercial position in the world and open the way for it to establish good relationships with other countries.

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Shaykh Muhammad called for more economic and commercial cooperation with China, stressing the importance of such cooperation. Shaykh Muhammad expressed satisfaction over relations between the UAE and China.

The meeting was attended by Sa'id al-Ghayth, UAE minister of state for cabinet affairs and head of the honorary mission accompanying the Chinese official, and the Chinese ambassador to the UAE, Hud Liming [name as received].

Yemen

Yemen: Speaker Sees No 'Abnormal' Problems in Saudi Relations

MM2205121296 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 19 May 96 pp 1, 6

[Interview with Yemeni House of Representatives Speaker Shaykh 'Abdallah al-Ahmar by Khayrallah Khayrallah in Sanaa on 18 May]

[FBIS Translated Text] In a statement to AL-HAYAH yesterday Shaykh 'Abdallah Bin Husayn al-Ahmar, speaker of the Yemeni House of Representatives, welcomed the announcement by Prince Sultan Bin-'Abd al-'Aziz, Saudi second deputy prime minister and minister of defense and aviation, of his intention to visit Yemen shortly.

Speaking during his daily council at his palace in the heart of Sanaa, Shaykh 'Abdallah said: "The visit of His Highness Prince Sultan to Yemen is greatly appreciated by the Yemenis and responds to their wishes and longing for Prince Sultan. All the Yemeni people consider Prince Sultan's visit to Yemen as a harbinger of good and blessings because they consider him a friend who is interested in Yemen's affairs and who has familiarized himself with all Yemen's issues and shown interest in them. We are awaiting his visit with utmost longing and we will treat him with every honor, because he is a great visitor and represents the fraternal Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with which we are bound by ties of brotherhood and kinship. We welcome him."

[Khayrallah] Do you think the visit will help in reaching a final solution to the border question?

[Al-Ahmar] Prince Sultan's visit will pave the way and facilitate all the next steps and dialogues to be held by the various joint committees for resolving all the problems, God willing.

[Khayrallah] You recently visited Saudi Arabia. Did you manage to dispel all the misunderstandings that existed between the two countries?

[Al-Ahmar] There was no misunderstanding. There were only some complications that had arisen in the work of some of the committees. So I met with His Highness Prince Sultan, I in my capacity as head of the Yemeni side on the Higher Committee and he in his capacity as head of the Saudi side on the Higher Committee, and we worked together to iron out these complications.

[Khayrallah] Could you tell us something about the nature of these complications that you just mentioned?

[Al-Ahmar] Complications and some degree of misunderstanding are bound to take place among the interlocutors in any negotiations whatever the issues they are discussing.

[Khayrallah] Then there was nothing abnormal?

[Al-Ahmar] There is nothing abnormal. It is a normal thing for differences to arise within any negotiating groups over methods of working.

[Khayrallah] One question pertaining to Yemeni domestic affairs: Why all this stringency in regard to the case of the 16 wanted people, whom the Yemeni state insists on trying?

[Al-Ahmar] I am surprised at this question being raised by any journalist, any Arab or anyone else for that matter. These 16 people and hundreds like them contributed to the detonation of the war and the proclamation of secession, caused bloodshed, and committed high treason. Had what they did in Yemen happened elsewhere, gallows would have been erected, trials would have been held, and heads would have rolled. But the president of the republic ('Ali 'Abdallah Salih) showed great magnanimity and issued a general amnesty of which many have made use, except for 16 people who are all symbols of high treason. Those who did not seek to benefit from the general amnesty will be considered in the same category as the 16.

[Khayrallah] Are relations good between the General People's Congress and the Yemeni Reform Grouping now?

[Al-Ahmar] Relations have always been good. It is normal for differences to arise sometimes.

[Khayrallah] Does this mean that you support the economic reforms embarked upon by the government?

[Al-Ahmar] Everyone supports reform, which should not be confined to one field to the exclusion of another. The reforms must be comprehensive and must cover the financial and administrative fields alike.

[Khayrallah] Do you insist on this point?

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[Al-Ahmar] This is what has been agreed upon.

Yemen: Salih Praises Agreement With Eritrea, Talks With Saudis

JN2205203396 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Television Network in Arabic 1800 GMT 22 May 96

[Announcer-read report over video]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] As part of our Yemeni people's celebrations of the sixth anniversary of the establishment of the Republic of Yemen on 22 May 1990, brother Lieutenant General 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih, president of the republic, inaugurated a number of development and services projects. Accompanied by brother Vice President Major General 'Abd-Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, the president inaugurated the new television building, channel one, and the new studios at the television and the Yemeni space station. [passage omitted]

In statements to the television, the brother president said:

[Begin recording] [Unidentified reporter] On this occasion, what do you say to the media men, the Yemeni space channel, and its viewers?

[Salih] This is a dear national occasion. I am happy today to inaugurate the new studio at the television and space channel. I appreciate the efforts of the Information Ministry and all its workers. This is an important achievement. This age is one of information. I hope that the media and media men will cope with all that is new. [passage omitted]

[Unidentified reporter] Brother president of the republic. On this immortal day in 1990, you laid down a strategic policy based on making Yemeni reunification a factor of security and stability in the region. Yesterday, a memorandum of understanding was signed between our country and Eritrea. Meanwhile, the third round of Yemeni-Saudi negotiations was held. What is Yemen's interest in the signing of the agreement in Paris yesterday?

[Salih] Undoubtedly, the signing of the agreement on principles between our country and the Eritrean Government is a positive step unexpected to others. They wanted to set a trap for this country and the neighboring country in the Red Sea. From the outset, we pursued a policy of looking for peaceful solutions. If the Eritreans have rights within the peaceful solution and the framework of international justice, they will have them. Therefore, we wanted to avoid a conflict.

Regarding the third round of the Yemeni-Saudi talks, positive results have been achieved. Perhaps this round will be better than the previous ones. The talks are proceeding in a better direction. [end recording]

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Iraq: 'Aziz—UN Accord 'Limited' 'Operation'

JN2205175796 Baghdad INA in Arabic
1708 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 22 May (INA) — Deputy Prime Minister Tariq 'Aziz asserted that the Memorandum of Understanding Iraq signed with the United Nations on the oil-for-food and medicine formula is a limited and programmed operation aiming to secure food, medicine, and a small part of the basic needs of the Iraqi people.

Attending an international seminar on the economic embargo and the rights of peoples held by the Non-Aligned Students and Youths Organization, NASYO, 'Aziz called on the world's popular and international organizations to stand principally and firmly against any resolution that imposes an economic blockade against any country, because the issue is no longer a legal one with the aim of rectifying a certain case, whether true or untrue, but rather a tool in the hands of American imperialism to achieve political goals.

The deputy prime minister added: The economic blockade and military aggression the United States launched against Iraq in January 1991 in the name of the Security Council and under the cover of the council's resolutions was an action with a political and military nature. He said the blockade had nothing to do with international law and the UN Charter, in terms of its justifications and actual results.

He added: America did not seek through its aggression to achieve the will of the international community, but rather to realize an American objective, because it does not want Iraq, which is an important country, to have a national leadership that opposes and resists American imperialist hegemony over the region.

Tariq 'Aziz stressed that the struggle to lift the blockade is in full harmony with the principles of the UN Charter, international law, ethics, and honor. This is because this struggle represents support for justice and human values. The one who rejects this struggle is hostile to international law and ethics and is also a criminal in the eyes of this law, he said.

'Aziz added that, regardless of the different views on issuing resolutions to impose blockades on Iraq, Libya, Yugoslavia, and Sudan, these resolutions actually have political, and not legal, objectives. Moreover, continuing, lifting, or easing the blockade is a political not a legal judgment, so we should insist on the legal and ethical explanation of UN resolutions and on enlightening the world public about the dangers of continuing the blockade and following the U.S. position.

Discussing the international situation in view of the absence of international balance, the deputy prime minister said: We should encourage the return of international balance—balance which was undermined in 1995 when the United States imposed its hegemony on the Security Council—to create international circumstances which will limit imperialist hegemony over the United Nations and the world.

'Aziz added: It was confirmed in the past that when the United States became the sole superpower crimes were committed against peoples; and hundreds of thousands of children, women, and old people were killed in Iraq and elsewhere. Moreover, there was a clear defect in the international balance and dealings. Hence, no legal or rational logic was left to address the international issues as a result of U.S. hegemony.

'Aziz asserted that, thanks to the bravery of its people and to its unique leadership, Iraq returned to the era of industry following the devastation caused by the forces of the treacherous 30-state aggression. This aggression, which was led by the United States, sought to push Iraq back to the pre-industrial era.

In its morning session, held under N. Bosindial [name as transliterated], head of NASYO's Foreign Relations Committee, the seminar discussed working papers submitted by the representatives of the youth federations from India, Sudan, Germany, and Palestine on the impact of the blockade on living conditions and on the need for struggle against all forms of blockade because they pose a serious threat to world security and peace. The working papers also stressed the need to stand with the Iraqi people in confronting the unjust blockade.

Speakers Subash Jordi [name as transliterated], head of the Indian Congress Youth Federation; Hisham Tijani, member of the Sudanese Youth Federation; Hisham 'Awdah, member of the Palestinian Youth Federation; and Mrs. Dorti [name as transliterated], member of the German Youth Organization, held the United States responsible for continuing the unjust blockade against the Iraqi people and aggravating international problems resulting from the hostile U.S. policies and the attempts to impose U.S. hegemony on the peoples looking forward to progress and development.

They also asserted that the struggle to lift the blockade and confront the imperialist schemes is the duty of all honorable and free men in the world because this struggle defends all noble values.

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Iraq: Al-Anbari—Accord Begins New 'Stage of Cooperation' With UN

JN2205155696 Paris Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic 1500 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] During the French cabinet's weekly session today, President Jacques Chirac expressed his happiness with the oil-for-food agreement concluded between Iraq and the United Nations. President Chirac welcomed this agreement, which he said will alleviate the Iraqi people's suffering. He said the French diplomacy contributed to this agreement.

To what extent will this agreement contribute to easing the suffering of the Iraqi people and what will it provide for them? This is a question that was posed by Salim Badawi to Ambassador 'Abd-al-Amir al-Anbari, who led the Iraqi team to negotiations with the United Nations.

[Begin al-Anbari recording] This resolution does not provide much. It provides about $600 million every three months. This means that for an Iraqi population of over 20 million, each Iraqi citizen will have only about 8 dollars a month for food, medicine, and other basic human needs. However, this is not what is important. What is important is that this resolution begins a new stage of cooperation between Iraq on the one hand and the UN Security Council and the United Nations on the other. It proves that Iraq has always been eager to have transparent, credible, and cooperative relations with the United Nations. No country would want to maintain a siege that has been imposed on it. This siege actually is more severe than an actual war. Therefore, we have always been eager to respond to the requirements of the UN Security Council resolutions, irrespective of our point of view about their unfairness and illegitimacy. We are realistic enough to accept and implement these resolutions. What is important is that this resolution will be a chance for the two parties to work together in a spirit of cooperation, especially since the organizations that will supervise the implementation of this plan on behalf of the United Nations will not be military or police organizations. Rather, they will be true humanitarian organizations in every sense. [end recording]

Iraq: Al-Anbari Expects Oil Exports To Begin in Jun

MM2305103096 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 23 May 96 pp 1, 6

[Report by Randah Taqiyy-al-Din in Paris: "Al-Anbari Tells AL-HAYAH: Iraq Could Start Exporting Oil in June"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Iraqi Ambassador Dr. 'Abd-al-Amir al-Anbari, head of the Iraqi delegation at the talks with the United Nations, told AL-HAYAH that he expects Iraqi oil exports to start some time early in June.

He said that the matter "does not rest only with us, since we could easily sign oil deals. However, three steps are required if these deals are to become effective." He said that the first step is "for the UN secretary general to open an escrow account with one of the international banks, which will be done within three or four days." He said that when he left the United Nations in New York, contacts were being held with some banks to find out what their terms are, because any bank opening such an account will want commission on it. He added that all oil export revenues will be deposited in this account which, under the terms of the resolution, will be named "the UN account for Iraq." It will be set up by the UN secretary general in consultation with Iraq and will be at his disposal to cover the expenses listed in Resolution 986. The amount is $2 billion for a 90-day period.

The second step "according to the resolution is for the boycott committee [Committee 661] to set up streamlined procedures for approving the deals that Iraq makes." He said that he has information to the effect that the committee has started its meetings and that these could end within a week.

The third step requires the secretary general to appoint two types of experts: oil experts who will be based at UN headquarters and who will be working 24 hours a day to receive the oil deals and approve them on behalf of the boycott committee, because the boycott committee will not approve or examine the technical aspect of the deals. And meanwhile, the secretary general will appoint independent investigators to ascertain the quantity and quality of the oil before shipping it from al-Bakr harbor and Turkey's Ceyhan harbor.

Al-Anbari stressed that Iraq will immediately be able to export oil as soon as these three steps have been completed. He said that he hopes that this will not take more than 15-19 days, enabling oil exports to begin during the first half of June.

Al-Anbari said that oil exports from the al-Karkuk area will be via the Turkish pipeline, while exports from

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the south will be via al-Bakr harbor. He estimates al-Bakr harbor's export capacity at some 700,000-800,000 barrels per day.

He said that the task of the independent investigators, to be appointed by the UN secretary general, will be to monitor the quantities exported and the quality of the oil at the export harbor. He said that the oil experts to be appointed by the UN secretary general, who will be based at the General Secretariat's headquarters, will be working shifts with one of them always present. They will be working by fax, and will be mostly Norwegians. The three experts are supposed to approve the oil deals and inform the companies concerned, Iraq, and the independent investigators at the oil terminals.

With regard to the oil deals that the companies want to make with Iraq, al-Anbari said that the oil company's state of origin will give the company's name to the boycott committee, and then the committee will register the company. When it receives a document from this company, it will be examined and the Iraqi oil marketing company SCOM [State Company for Oil Marketing] must confirm to the committee that it has in fact made a deal with the company for a specific quantity of oil at a specific price, after a deal between the SCOM and the foreign company has been concluded. He said that the same procedure will be followed for food purchases. Iraq will make deals with a specific vendor, in line with the accepted international norms, and the vendor's state of origin will propose the matter to the boycott committee. [passage omitted]

Iraq: Commentary—UN Accord 'Beginning' of End to Blockade

JN2205172896 Baghdad Mother of Battles Radio in Arabic 1750 GMT 21 May 96

[Station commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] Yesterday, 20 May, Iraq and the United Nations signed a memorandum of understanding on the implementation of the formula of trading oil for food, medicine, and other basic needs of the Arab people of Iraq. Dialogue between the two parties went on for four full months. During the dialogue, the U.S. Administration played a deliberate destructive role, along with its British satellite — which has harbored grudges toward the Arabs ever since this nation kicked it out from many areas it occupied and colonized during World War I.

During these four months, Iraq was keen on ensuring the success of these negotiations and was even more keen on the Iraqi national constants, which are a vital and basic part of the pan-Arab constants. Iraq finalized the agreement, taking into consideration the need to preserve the unity of Iraq, guarantee its sovereignty, and ensure its independence. The river of blood that was shed for the sake of Iraq's unity, sovereignty, and independence cannot be relinquished in view of hunger, disease, or even suffering that results from nakedness, for moral nakedness is far more dangerous. If honor is maintained, the torn clothes are more sublime, purer, and greater.

The observers were not amazed at the statements of the U.S. Administration after the signing of the agreement, alleging that it cares for the people of Iraq. It is known that this administration killed more than one and quarter million Iraqis, including more than 550,000 children, who were killed by the U.S. insistence on preventing food, medicine, and even milk from reaching them. They kill someone, take part in his funeral, and even hit their faces to express sadness. This is the case with the U.S. Administration, which continued to shower Iraq with death and destruction throughout 43 days, destroying the infrastructure and killing children, women, and old people even in shelters, as happened in al-'Amiriyah. It then imposed the blockade on Iraq during all these years.

The signing of the agreement was much to the U.S. Administration's dismay, because it realizes very well that it marks the beginning of the end of its criminal and sinful blockade, which has been in place for five and a half years so far. The blockade is being shattered by the will of the Iraqis and will come to a final end thanks to the patience of the Iraqis and adherence to their great and mujahid leadership — the leadership of Saddam Husayn, which inspirers the nation and embodies its ambitions for might, unity, progress, and fraternity.

This agreement can never be an alternative to the implementation of Paragraph 22 of Resolution 687. This fact was thoroughly made clear by Iraq. Security Council members, except America and Britain, are aware of this fact.

Iraq: Paper—Iraqi-UN Accord Opens 'Wide Hole' in Blockade

JN2205174496 Baghdad INA in Arabic 0645 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 22 May (INA)—The newspaper AL-THAWRAH asserts that the insistence by the Iraqis and their leadership to adhere to the national constants related to sovereignty and national unity were basic factors in signing the Memorandum of Understanding [MOU] by Iraq and the United Nations on Monday [21 May].

In an article published today, the paper, mouthpiece of the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party, says: The signing of the

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MOU opened a wide hole in the wall of the blockade which was imposed on Iraq six years ago. It is the first step on the path of completely ending this blockade by implementing paragraph 22 of Resolution 687.

AL-THAWRAH adds: What was agreed upon is a temporary solution that does not cancel the implementation of paragraph 22. This paragraph was approved by a clear majority of 13 permanent and nonpermanent Security Council member states whose deliberations at the Security Council frequently emphasized that Iraq has the right to demand lifting the blockade and implementing this paragraph.

The paper points out the fact that France and Russia proposed a joint plan for deliberations, which was supported by China. However, this proposal was postponed due to U.S. interference and clear influence in the Security Council and inside the United Nations itself. The paper says: The intransigent U.S. position which had political purposes and objectives, and which was supported by Britain, prevented the ultimate lifting of this blockade.

AL-THAWRAH stresses that what was agreed upon and the hole that was opened in the wall of the blockade would not have been achieved had it not been for President Saddam Husayn's distinguished leadership and for the masses' rallying around him. This rallying was expressed in the popular referendum held on 15 October 1995.

The paper adds: This popular referendum was a clear declaration that the Iraqi people continue to show their loyalty to their leader and that they are ready to continue their legendary steadfastness until victory and passage to safety are achieved.

The paper hails the positions of the friends and many states who explained Iraq's legitimate right to lift the injustice imposed on its people. It asserts that the signing of the MOU is a step which will be followed by more steps on the path of ending the blockade as long as the Iraqi people insist on their high principles and adherence to their national constants.

Iraq: Ports Said Ready To Receive Ships, Oil Tankers

JN2205193296 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1700 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 22 May (INA)—Iraq completed all the requirements to receive merchant ships and oil tankers with large cargoes at its oil and commercial ports on the Arabian Gulf.

This was announced to INA today by Transport and Telecommunications Minister Dr. Ahmad Murtada Ahmad who added that the State Enterprise for Iraqi Ports prepared the loading and unloading jetties at the ports of Umm Qasr and Khawr al-Zubayr and that they are fully prepared to receive various kinds of ships.

The minister added that the enterprise also adopted many effective measures in this regard to bring its work up to the level of aspirations by relying on national experience and efforts. These efforts include retrieving tens of drowned ships from maritime channels and in front of the jetties and preparing the maritime channels leading to our oil ports and to the ports of Umm Qasr and Khawr al-Zubayr, which are now passable and safe for receiving ships.

The minister pointed to the recent arrival of many merchant ships laden with food. He said that the enterprise's staff repaired some maritime vessels with extraordinary efforts. They include maritime drills, tugboats, boats for carrying passengers, dredgers, water tankers, and fuel tankers. Work is under way to repair other maritime vessels which were damaged as a result of the treacherous 30-state aggression, he added.

Iraq: SAIRI Leader Sends Letter to UN Head on Oil Deal

NC2205155896 (Clandestine) Voice of Iraqi Islamic Revolution in Arabic 1430 GMT 22 May 96

["Text" of letter sent by Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, chairman of the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SAIRI), to UN Secretary General Dr. Butrus Butrus-Ghali and members of the UN Security Council on 21 May]

[FBIS Translated Text] Your Esteemed Excellency UN Secretary General Dr. Butrus Butrus-Ghali and the respected president and members of the Security Council:

Greetings. The Baghdad regime at last signed the final wording of the negotiations with the United Nations on the basis of Resolution 986, also known as the oil-for-food resolution.

We hope that the signed text will be implemented to the letter on the basis of Resolution 986 and its declared terms. We also hope that this deal and its terms stipulated in that resolution will not be manipulated by any side. This is because the humanitarian suffering of the Iraqi people as a result of this regime's hegemony cannot provide a justification for anyone — especially the Baghdad regime, which is the real cause of this suffering — to exploit the deal for his own interest.

Therefore, we ask the international community, the Security Council, and the UN secretary general personally

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— who has called for lifting the suffering — to guarantee that the Iraqi Government will not misuse and exploit these revenues in such a way as to facilitate the daily life of its members and ignore the Iraqi people.

We were the first to call for such measures, and worked out and contributed to wording several resolutions to ease and lift the suffering in various spheres.

We remind you that a sound distribution, the conveyance of food and medical supplies to all regions — especially the regions that have been under a military siege for years in the southern marshes — and guaranteeing the distribution of such supplies require tightened direct supervision. The regime has used the supply cards as arbitrary means to deprive large sections of the Iraqi people.

Best regards.

Iraq: SAIRI Official on Acceptance of Resolution 986

NC2205162096 (Clandestine) Voice of Iraqi Islamic Revolution in Arabic 1430 GMT 21 May 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Dr. Abu-Ahmad Ramadan, official in charge of the Culture and Media Unit of the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq [SAIRI], made an exclusive statement to our radio on the tyrant Saddam regime's accepting the export of a limited amount of oil for humanitarian purposes in accordance with Resolution 986. Ramadan said the regime's acceptance came too late to meet the Iraqi people's needs. Ramadan said:

[Begin Ramadan recording] In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate. The regime's acceptance of Resolution 986 comes as no surprise to the regional and international communities or even to the Iraqi people. The regime that always said no has accepted Resolution 986. We have some questions on this subject so that we might understand the motives behind this acceptance.

The regime, which long tried to change this resolution, has now accepted it. What has changed in the resolution? Does it not have the same provisions? One of the resolution's provisions is that the regime not be allowed to conclude contracts with any oil company to sell Iraqi oil without the authorization of the UN sanctions committee. This means the regime will be unable to embark on such contracts as a sovereign and free state.

The second question is that UN distribution network personnel, who will implement the resolution, will have freedom of movement from north to south in Iraq. Those personnel are classified as diplomats. These provisions were stipulated in the resolution from the start. We ask the regime: In what way has the resolution changed to justify the people's suffering and their deprivation of the benefits of their oil for so long? [passage omitted]

The other thing is that we believe the regime will interfere to starve some families. The United Nations should examine this issue. We say clearly that the Iraqi people must participate in and supervise the implementation of this resolution, because without the people's supervision there will be no real guarantee for its implementation. We also ask the United Nations to implement a policy that would guarantee the distribution [of food and medicine]. This is the direct responsibility of the United Nations.

Another thing is that the United Nations, which showed great interest in ensuring the implementation of Resolution 986, must also endeavor to implement Resolution 688, which calls for halting repression and easing the suffering of the Iraqi people. This resolution must be implemented and enforced by the UN Security Council. [passage omitted] [end recording]

Iraq: KDP Spokesman Stresses 'Fair' Implementation of Oil Accord

JN2205195096 (Clandestine) Voice of Iraqi Kurdistan in Arabic 1815 GMT 21 May 96

[Statement by "an official spokesman" of the KDP Political Bureau; place and date not given—read by announcer]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Citizens in the Iraqi Kurdistan region and elsewhere in Iraq have expressed jubilation over the Iraq-UN agreement on selling oil for food in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 986. This result vindicate's the logical policy of our Kurdistan Democratic Party [KDP]. From the beginning, our party emphasized the need to implement that resolution and stressed its full support for the talks on reaching a formula to sell oil in exchange for food. The amount is estimated at $1 billion worth of oil every three months to be sold under strict UN supervision. The revenues must be used to buy food and medicine for the Iraqi citizens. It was decided to earmark 15 percent of the amount for the inhabitants of the liberated areas in Kurdistan. The United Nations strictly supervises the distribution of these materials in Kurdistan.

The agreement will take several weeks to implement for technical, administrative, security, and other reasons. However, the signing of the agreement greatly raised the hopes of the Iraqi people who have suffered from high prices, poverty, and starvation over the past five years. We hope that distribution of food, medicine, and other materials will meet most of the basic needs of the people.

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As for the Kurdistan region, the two parties [KDP and Talabani-led Patriotic Union of Kurdistan] and the other parties and government departments must be ready to prepare conditions for just distribution of materials that reach Kurdistan. The political, administrative, and security bodies that are actually responsible in Kurdistan must agree on delivering food and other materials to everybody and ensure fair dealing in this vital domain. Ensuring justice and delivering food for all deserving families requires serious thinking on solving problems peacefully and quickly, particularly the problem of Irbil, the capital, making it a weapon- free, safe city so that the legitimate authorities can resume their normal work and so that joint efforts will take place in order that people in the region might make best use of their share of oil revenues.

The abnormal conditions in Irbil and Kurdistan in general may create difficulties preventing a correct and fair distribution. Therefore, efforts must be exerted to ensure justice and avoid any favoritism in distribution based on political, denominational, or ethnic affiliations. In short, we emphasize the following:

1. We are of the view that just and fair distribution of food and other materials is an administrative political process closely linked to the peace process to solve the crisis politically, particularly the problem of Irbil, the capital; the return of parliament; the formation of a new government; and the problems of revenues and other problems with the aim of restoring normal conditions, stability, and peace.

2. While welcoming the IRAQ-UN agreement and congratulating the Kurdish and Iraqi people, we emphasize our party's clear stand in support of this resolution and our party's role in implementing it. We reiterate our Political Bureau's announcement a few months ago; namely, that the KDP will extend all the necessary assistance to implement the oil sale agreement, especially repairing and operating the pumping station in the Zakho area and repairing and operating the part of the pipeline that runs through the areas under our control. [passage omitted]

Iraq: PUK Welcomes Baghdad's Acceptance of Resolution 986

NC2205182996 (Clandestine) Voice of the People of Kurdistan in Arabic 1500 GMT 21 May 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan's [PUK] Political Bureau has sent a cable of congratulations to the masses of Kurdistan to mark the Iraqi regime's submission to the will of the international community and its agreement to implement Resolution 986. The following is the text of the cable: Marking the Iraqi regime's agreement to implement UN Resolution 986, the PUK Political Bureau conveys its heartfelt congratulations to the Iraqi masses in general and the Kurdistan masses in particular. This resolution will ensure citizens' basic needs are met to a reasonable extent, especially as the distribution of food in Kurdistan will be handled directly by UN officials in cooperation with the government of the Kurdistan region. This will take place away from the interference of the Iraqi regime, which will be unable to exploit the food issue to pressure citizens to serve its own interests and to impose the will of the ruling dictatorial regime in Baghdad. [passage omitted].

We hope Resolution 986 will help intensify the struggle against the dictatorial regime.

We repeat our warmest congratulations to the masses of Kurdistan and the Iraqi people.

Iraq: 'New Problems' Expected for Ekeus Team in Iraq

MM2205130796 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 18 May 96 p 17

[Article by Kamran Qurrah Daghi: "Ekeus Expects Problems"]

[FBIS Translated Text] While President Saddam Husayn continues to stand "firm" in the face of the international community in the hope that it will give in to his demands regarding implementation of the "oil-for-food" principle, the chairman of the UN special commission for the elimination of Iraqi mass destruction weapons has again warned that Baghdad might yet again refuse to allow his UN experts to carry out their inspection duties in Iraq, expecting new problems.

Perhaps the fact that Ekeus has been dealing with the Baghdad regime over the past five years has made him an expert on detecting that regime's swindling and treacherous methods of circumventing the terms it is required to fulfill before the economic sanctions against Iraq are lifted. That is why the Security Council's big five should take seriously Ekeus' warning that the Iraqi position heralds fresh tension "soon."

Actually, Ekeus' warning and his expectation of a new crisis triggered by Baghdad could be considered a warning against any new concessions to Saddam in the current oil negotiations in New York between the UN secretariat and an Iraqi delegation headed by 'Abd-al-Amir al-Anbari. It is quite clear that if these talks result in an agreement that takes into consideration the principle of "face-saving" for Saddam, which Secretary General Butrus-Ghali seems to be willing to accept, at the expense of the implementation of Resolution 986 in a way that would benefit Iraqis who are not "friends" of

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Saddam, then Ekeus is certain to face many times more difficult problems and troubles than he expects.

Ekeus did not give any details about his meeting with the representatives of the Security Council's five permanent member states, but some diplomats have leaked reports indicating that he had called for measures aimed at "sending a message" that would deter Baghdad from making any fresh attempts to obstruct the UN experts' planned operations in Iraqi positions in search of anything which might help them eliminate the weapons of mass destruction on which the Iraqi regime is withholding information.

There can be no question that the Security Council is coming under tremendous pressures to do something to ease the Iraqi people's suffering. It is also certain that the UN General Secretariat is interested in finding some solution that would serve that end. It is clear that the activities of the international organizations aided by the Iraqi regime to project the magnitude of the Iraqi people's plight tend in the direction of these pressures despite the fact that most of these activities are one-sided, attributing the suffering to the international blockade while totally ignoring exposure of the regime which uses the blockade to blackmail the international community.

In other words Baghdad is betting that humanitarian considerations will force the international community to do something to prevent intensification of the tragedies of the Iraqi people, even at the expense of making concessions that would be "face-saving for Saddam" who can easily stand fast so long as the people dying are members of the Iraqi public who mean nothing to him.

At the same time, implementation of Resolution 986, even on the basis of the "face-saving" principle, would deprive Saddam of the ability to exploit the international humanitarian sympathy with the Iraqi people, so long as that implementation eases the suffering. That is perhaps one of the factors on which the United States is betting, a factor that would ease the pressure on it to completely lift the embargo, but Washington could lose that bet. That fear was recently expressed in an article written by Patrick Clawson of the Strategic Studies Institute of the National Defense University in Washington, on the grounds that partial lifting of the sanctions could lead to an erosion of the blockade instead of easing the pressures for lifting it, and Saddam and his regime would escape.

That is the problem.

Iraq: Oppositionist—Observers Face Problems With Security Forces

MM2205162796 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 22 May 96 p 2

[Report by 'Imad al-Furayh in Amman: "Iraqis Celebrate the Agreement on the 'Oil-for-Food' Resolution Until Dawn"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT's office in Amman conducted telephone conversations with Iraqi families in Baghdad, who expressed their happiness with the agreement, and talked about spontaneous dancing and folk music in the streets, while car horns were being sounded and shots fired in the air. An Iraqi citizen said that, although he does not know the details of the resolution, he is extremely and indescribably happy because he will be able to provide food for his children and family.

Iraqis in Amman welcomed the news of the success of the negotiations with the United Nations with celebrations to equal those in Iraq. When the news flashed on the screens of Jordanian Television's Channel 1, cries of joy rose from the Iraqis' homes, accompanied by tears of joy for a people who, for six long years, have suffered from starvation and disease and borne the brunt of the sanctions for mistakes for which they were not responsible.

An Iraqi politician living in Amman said that the Iraqi people's celebrations show that, unlike the Iraqi leadership which for a long time talked about the Iraqi people's sovereignty, the people support the Security Council resolution. The Iraqi politician said that these celebrations "reflect the people's opposition to their leaders who adopted a hard-line position toward the Security Council resolutions, and show that Iraqis could wait no longer."

A leading opposition figure in Amman told AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT that the success of the negotiations provides "the first ray of hope for the Iraqis who were deprived of food and medicine because of the obstinacy of President Saddam Husayn's regime and because of his ploys when dealing with the Security Council resolutions," stressing that had the Iraqi president agreed to Resolution 986 when it was issued last year and to the other Security council resolutions for the last six years "he would have saved many victims and safeguarded the Iraqis' dignity."

The Iraqi oppositionist held President Saddam Husayn responsible for the deaths of thousands of children and elderly people, for squandering the Iraqis' dignity, for displacing them, and for their suffering. He added that "the mere fact that Iraqis are taking to the streets to

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celebrate the success of Resolution 986 which was rejected by the Iraqi president in the beginning, shows the people's opposition to the regime's decisions," and that "the regime must learn from this lesson when dealing with the Security Council's other resolutions."

The leading oppositionist believes that Resolution 986, whose implementation will be closely monitored by the United Nations, will prevent President Saddam Husayn's regime from misusing the Iraqi oil revenues. He said that the international organization's observers will monitor the Iraqi oil revenues in accordance with Resolution 986 and the level of exports to Jordan. This resolution will prevent Iraqi oil from being smuggled out via Turkey, Iran, and Jordan.

The Iraqi oppositionist anticipates that the implementation of the resolution will face practical obstacles in Baghdad, saying that he expects some problems to erupt between the UN observers and the security organs run by the Iraqi president's two sons, 'Udayy and Qusayy, and from some party members who will suffer because the resolution's implementation insists on fairness, with regard to both quantity and quality, in the distribution of food and medicine among all citizens, because the security organs' members and government and party officials get six times as much as the ordinary citizen, and better quality flour, rice, oil, milk, and meat. [passage omitted]

Iraq: Iraqi, Egyptian Unions Sign Cooperation Protocol

NC2205195996 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1825 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad 22 May (MENA)—A protocol on industrial cooperation between the industrial unions of Iraq and Egypt was signed in Baghdad tonight. The protocol was signed by 'Adnan al-Qudsi, the head of the Iraqi Industries Union, and Mamduh Makki, deputy head of the Egyptian union, who is currently visiting Baghdad.

In a statement to a MENA correspondent in Baghdad, Makki said the Egyptian-Iraqi cooperation protocol is a prelude to restoring trade and industrial relations between Baghdad and Cairo following a long interruption. He said the protocol reflects the two unions' goodwill and initiative to start fruitful and serious cooperation.

Makki described the protocol as the first serious means of Arab cooperation, saying it was signed at the appropriate time.

Al-Qudsi described the protocol as an important step toward strengthening and promoting cooperation between the two unions, expressing his hope that further cooperation will take place between the two unions to serve the two countries' interests.

The protocol provides for cooperation between the two unions and the exchange of information and expertise. This would promote and develop industry and cooperation in the technical fields, such as in certificates of origin and specifications regarding commodities. The protocol also calls for the protection of the environment, for cooperation in the industrial planning field, and the exchange of visits between the two unions' officials. According to the protocol the two unions will hold industrial exhibitions, encourage investments according to current laws, and benefit from investment incentives available in the two countries.

Iraq: Trade Delegation Leaves Amman for Southeast Asia

JN2305082596 Amman AL-RA'Y in Arabic
23 May 96 p 10

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Amman/World capitals, AL-RAY and news agencies — Economic sources in Amman said an Iraqi Trade Ministry delegation left Amman for Southeast Asia yesterday.

The sources said the Iraqi delegation will visit several Southeast Asian capitals to sign contracts to purchase food and medicine as part of the oil-for-food deal. [passage omitted]

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Israel: Baraq on 'Exchange of Views' With Jordan's Husayn

TA2205084096 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English 0400 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq held an unexpected two and a half hour meeting with Jordan's King Husayn in London at the king's request. But, as we hear in this report from Jerry Lewis, there is a mystery as to what was discussed.

[Begin Lewis recording] Ehud Baraq remained tight-lipped about the contents of his lengthy meeting with the Jordanian monarch, when he met Israeli journalists at Heathrow Airport prior to taking his return late-night flight to Israel, briefing Shim'on Peres on a mobile telephone before answering questions. He maintained that many words were exchanged during their closed 90-minute talk, followed by a private dinner lasting another hour, and that it was the prerogative of the king that when he met Israeli leaders, nothing would emerge from their meeting.

However, Ehud Baraq hinted that the discussions were not aimed at dealing with the rumored difficulties that it had been reported existed following the recent Lebanese operation. Qana, he said, was not even mentioned. He added that his visit showed that at times of peace, when approaching any kind of major crossroads, there was a need for an exchange of views and perceptions.

So, who called the meeting? And why so close to an Israeli election? It was at King Husayn's initiative and the matters discussed were not relevant to the Israeli elections but concerned the contours of the peace to be worked out with the Palestinians and beyond, including the next steps to be taken with regard to the Syrians. And, he emphasized, Israel felt that a strong, independent, stable and self-confident Hashemite Kingdom on Israel's eastern border, was a major strategic interest of the State of Israel, beyond the relationship that had already been established between the Israeli people and the Jordanian monarch over the last few hours.

Pressed as to what this reference to the need for a strong Jordan on Israel's border was all about, Mr. Baraq declined to go into any further details beyond saying that Israel's relations with Jordan were stable and that the atmosphere of the talks was excellent. [end recording]

Israel: Poll Shows Peres With 7 Percent Lead; Coalition Preferences

TA2305090296 Tel Aviv MA'ARIV in Hebrew 23 May 96 p 1

[Gallup poll]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Question: Were elections to the premiership held today between Shim'on Peres and Binyamin Netanyahu, who would you vote for?

Answer: Peres — 47 percent; Netanyahu — 40 percent; neither — 3 percent; undecided — 10 percent.

Question: If the Knesset elections were held today, which party would you vote for?

The answers are given in Knesset seats, with the number of seats in the current Knesset noted in parentheses:

Labor	39 (44)
Likud+Tzomet+Gesher	33 (40)
Meretz	9 (12)
SHAS [Torah Observing Sephardim]	4 (6)
Moledet	4 (3)
United Torah Jewry	5 (4)
National Religious Party [NRP]	9 (6)
Arabs	5 (5)
The Third Way	4
Immigrants	4
Do not know/undecided/will not say	4

[An expanded version of the same poll on page 9 of the HAG supplement of the same MA'ARIV issue adds:

["Question: If Peres wins, which parties would you rather make up the coalition? (answers, in percentage points, by Peres voters only):

["Meretz — 79; Third Way — 55; immigrants party — 54; Arabs — 48; NRP — 45; SHAS — 29; Likud — 20; ultra-Orthodox — 15.

["Question: If Netanyahu wins, which parties would you rather make up the coalition? (answers, in percentage points, by Netanyahu voters only):

["NRP — 87; Third Way — 71; Moledet — 71; SHAS — 65; ultra- Orthodox — 51; immigrants party — 48; Labor — 37."

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["The elections poll was conducted last week, among 1,387 Israeli adults including the Arab population. Margin of error is 2.5 percent. Other results are based on a poll conducted among 509 Israeli adults. Margin of error is 4 percent."]

Israel: Poll Shows Peres Leading by 6 Percent; Third Way, Meretz Up

TA2305090796 Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew 23 May 96 p 2

[Public opinion poll conducted by the Geocartographia Institute directed by Professor Avi Degani and Dr. Rina Degani]

[FBIS Translated Text] Question: Were elections to the premiership held today, who would you vote for? (Results quoted in percentage points, with results of previous poll given in brackets)

Answer: Peres — 51 (48); Netanyahu — 45 (44); undecided/did not reply — 4 (8).

Question: Were elections to the Knesset held today, which party would you vote for? (Results quoted in number of Knesset seats, with results of previous poll given in brackets)

	Forecast seats	Current Knesset
Labor	40 (41-)	44
Likud+Tzomet+Gesher	34 (37)	40
Meretz	8+ (6)	12
Moledet	4+ (4-)	3
National Religious Party	8- (8)	6
United Torah Jewry	4- (4)	4
SHAS	5 (4+)	6
HADASH	5- (5)	3
The Third Way	3+ (2)	—
Yisra'el Ba'aliya	6+ (6)	—
ADP+Islamic Movement	2+ (2)	2 (ADP)

[Key to abbreviations: SHAS [Torah Observing Sephardim] HADASH [Democratic Front for Peace and Equality]; ADP [Arab Democratic Party]

Parties which did not obtain the minimum quota are not included in the forecast.

The poll was conducted on 21 and 22 May on 1,050 respondents who constitute a representative sample of Israel's adult population. The maximum margin of error is approximately 3 percent.

Israel: Dahaf Poll Shows Peres Leading by 4.5 percent

TA2305091096 Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew 23 May 96 p 2

[Public opinion poll conducted by the Dahaf Institute directed by Dr. Mina Tzemah]

[FBIS Translated Text] Question: Were elections for the premiership held today and the candidates were Shim'on Peres and Binyamin Netanyahu, who would you vote for? (Results quoted in percentage points, with results of previous poll given in brackets)

Answer: Peres — 50.3 (49.6); Netanyahu — 45.8 (44.2); undecided/did not reply — 3.9 (6.2)

Question: Were elections to the Knesset held today, which party would you vote for? (Results quoted in Knesset seats, with results of previous poll given in brackets)

	Forecast seats	Current Knesset
Labor	41 (41)	44
Likud+Tzomet+Gesher	38 (39)	40
Meretz	9 (8)	12
Moledet	3+ (3)	3
National Religious Party	7 (7)	6
United Torah Jewry	4 (4)	4
SHAS	5 (5)	6
HADASH	3+ (3+)	3
The Third Way	2 (2)	—
Yisra'el Ba'aliya	5 (4)	—
ADP+Islamic Movement	2+ (2+)	2 (ADP)

[Key to abbreviations: SHAS [Torah Observing Sephardim] HADASH [Democratic Front for Peace and Equality]; ADP [Arab Democratic Party]

Parties which did not obtain the minimum quota are not included in the forecast.

The poll was conducted on 21 and 22 May on 1,004 respondents who constitute a representative sample of

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Israel's adult population. The maximum margin of error is approximately 3 percent.

Israel: Police Discuss Election Day Deployment

TA2205135096 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1300 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Israel Police and the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] will deploy over 20,000 policemen and soldiers on election day in polling stations and sites where various events will take place. Over 3,000 will be deployed in Jerusalem alone. A total closure will be imposed on the territories three days before the elections.

Police Commissioner Asaf Hefetz reported that to date the police have opened 120 cases of confrontations and incidents between party activists. Our correspondent Yo'av Ya'aqov reported the commissioner's remarks at the end of a meeting of Israel Police's top brass to discuss preparations for the elections.

Israel: West Bank Closure Reinforced

TA2305113996 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1100 GMT 23 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The IDF [Israel Defense Forces] is stepping up the closure even further, this time in Judaea and Samaria. Our correspondent Yoni Ben-Menahem reports that in this framework Palestinians will be forbidden to work in Jewish settlements in Judaea, Samaria, and the Jordan Valley at this stage.

Israel: Implications of Abu-Mazin as 'Arafat Successor Viewed

TA2305064396 (Internet) Hebron Today in English 23 May 96

[Commentary: "Is 'Arafat Dead?"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Qol Yisra'el reported tonight that Abu-Mazin, otherwise known as Muhammad 'Abbas, has been chosen to succeed 'Arafat should 'Arafat die prior to the end of his term as President of the PA [Palestinian Autonomy].

This announcement should light up a red light — is 'Arafat still alive? Earlier reports of 'Arafat's loss of consciousness and possible stroke, together with a sudden decision as to his likely successor point in the direction of a critical illness, or even possibly, imminent death of the scrounge of present civilization.

The implications of an 'Arafat death, one week before the elections, are mind-boggling. The entire 'piece-process' is founded on an 'Arafat-Israel bond. 'Arafat is the only person who can control the Arab factions within the PLO and throughout the Palestinian Authority. Should he suddenly disappear from the scene, turmoil is not only likely — it is assured.

The result will be a total collapse of everything Peres (Rabin) has been promising the Israeli people for the last four years. It will also ensure, beyond any doubt, a Netanyahu victory next Wednesday [29 May].

If Peres has not yet been notified of 'Arafat's demise, he is more than likely praying harder than he has ever prayed in his life. If 'Arafat is already dead, I wonder how much money Peres has offered them to keep it quiet for a week.

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Jordan: Iraq Confirms al-'Aqabah Port To Remain Import 'Gateway'

JN2305102596 Amman AL-RA'Y in Arabic 23 May 96 p 1

[Report by Khalid al-Zubaydi]

[FBIS Translated Text] An Iraqi Industry Ministry under secretary confirmed to government and private-sector officials that Jordan will be the major gateway for food and medicine imported through Iraqi contracts. These contracts will be executed in the next four weeks as part of the oil-for-food deal.

This position emerged in an Iraqi delegation's meeting with Transport Minister Nasir al-Lawzi and Khaldun Abu-Hassan, president of the Amman Chamber of Industry.

The Iraqi delegation left Amman yesterday for a tour of Southeast Asian capitals. The Iraqis will sign contracts to purchase food, cooking oil, medicine, power generators, and spare parts to maintain and service Iraqi power stations.

A responsible source at the Amman Chamber of Industry told AL- RA'Y that the Iraqi delegation presented a scenario on how the agreement will be implemented. Most of the Iraqi oil will be pumped through the Turkish pipeline. A small amount will be transported by oil tankers via the Iraqi port of Umm Qasr on Shatt al-'Arab. Iraq will use al-'Aqabah Port for its imports from the Mediterranean, Europe, and the United States and Umm Qasr Port for its imports from Southeast Asia.

Umm Qasr Port has a limited capacity because it cannot receive vessels with deep drafts.

The source said the Iraqi official asked the Jordanians to be ready to receive Iraqi imports, particularly at al-'Aqabah Port and in the free zone and to ease the customs measures and procedures.

The source added that the Iraqi officials reaffirmed their position on the continuation of imports from Jordan and giving priority status to Jordanian products. The source cited the Iraqis as saying: We will not forget Jordan's support for Iraq over the past six years. They also said that Iraq is Jordan's depth and vice versa.

Jordan: Tripartite Summit Urged To Endorse Pan-Arab Stand on Iraq

JN2305091696 Amman THE STAR in English 23-29 May 96 p 4

[Editorial: "An Arab Stand on Iraq"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The week's acceptance by Iraq of an "oil- for-food" offer is the first positive development in relations between Iraq and the UN since the Security Council imposed an unprecedented sanctions regime against Baghdad.

While the deal will allow Iraq to sell $2 billion worth of oil every six months in order to pay for humanitarian needs such as food and medicine, we should not consider the plight of the Iraqi people as a closed matter. Independent studies and reports, including those of UN agencies, confirm that Iraq's economic and social conditions have deteriorated to a dire state. With only 60 percent of the Iraqi people is still beyond reach for the Iraqi government. In addition, the Security Council has put too many conditions on the Iraqi government that the credibility and durability of the agreement will remain in doubt for some time.

The Security Council must recognize that its responsibility in Iraq goes beyond guaranteeing the dismantling of weapons of mass destruction and paying the bill of UN monitors there. The fact that the sanctions are the main cause of starvation, malnutrition and a general deterioration in public health standards in Iraq today puts the Security Council before moral and legal dilemmas. It now stands responsible for maintaining a policy of collective punishment against the population of Iraq which has resulted in thousands of deaths, especially among children, and the unending suffering for the whole population.

It is now clear that interim arrangements, such as the latest deal, will not end such suffering. The Security Council, as a body, must muster the moral strength to seriously review the consequences of the six-year-old sanctions on the Iraqi population who cannot be punished for the political blunders of their government.

Moreover, the Security Council must take into consideration the numerous positive signs that the Baghdad government has presented throughout the period following the Gulf War in meeting the requirements of the UN resolutions. It is inconceivable that the severity of the sanctions should remain the same when the price of maintaining it, in human terms, is so outrageous and when the final goal of the UN and its organs should be to rehabilitate Iraq into joining the world community.

This is why the Arab world has a special responsibility to bring fresh pressure on the United States and Britain, the only two countries opposed to any easing up in the sanctions, and the rest of the Security Council members. But the irony is that even the Arabs are still divided over what to do with Iraq and the regime of Saddam Husayn. The moral obligation is not exclusive to the UN and the Security Council only, but rests with the Arab and Muslim worlds as well.

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Jordan, Egypt and the Palestine National Authority, whose leaders met in Cairo recently to announce that they are behind efforts to revive pan-Arab coordination on national issues, bear special responsibility at this sensitive stage. Taking a firm stand on Iraq could usher the regaining of conscience to the Arab order. That's why the tripartite Amman meeting must adopt that stand.

Jordan: Iraq Said Likely To Pay War Compensation by October

JN2305091896 Amman JORDAN TIMES in English 23-24 May 96 pp 12, 3

[Report by P.V. Vivekanand]

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Amman—Successful Jordanian applicants for compensation for indirect and direct losses resulting from the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 could expect payment in October, an official involved in processing the applications and dealing with the U.N. compensation committee said Wednesday.

Over 110,000 Jordanians have applied for compensation from the U.N. Compensation Committee based in Geneva. The applications, which do not include state claims, are collectively worth $3.5 billion.

More than half of the applications are in the "A" category—those who were forced to leave Kuwait as a result of the Iraqi invasion in August 1990. Under a U.N. resolution adopted after Iraq was ousted from Kuwait in February 1991, they are entitled to a minimum of $2,500 each in compensation.

"We are very happy that Iraq has accepted the deal with the United Nations, and all indications are that the successful applicants would be getting paid before the end of October," said Yahya al-'Utaybi, an executive at a special centre for processing applications for compensation. [passage omitted]

Carlos Alzamora, executive secretary of the U.N. Compensation Fund, also said late Tuesday that successful claimants would get their first substantial compensation before the end of the year.

"The humanitarian operation will make it possible to provide relief to millions of claimants and their families," he said in remarks carried by international news agencies.

The committee has received 2.6 million claims, collectively worth over $200 billion.

Mr. Alzamora said he expected Iraqi oil sales to begin after June and the first payments by the compensation committee could come two months thereafter.

So far, the commission, which received $50 million since its establishment in 1992, dispensed about $13.5 million to 400 claimants in category "B"—those who suffered serious injuries and families which suffered deaths as a result of the Iraqi invasion. [passage omitted]

Jordan: Economic Effects of UN-Iraq Oil Agreement Viewed

JN2305082896 Amman THE STAR in English 23-29 May 96 pp 1-2

[Report by Munthir Hamdan]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The oil-for-food agreement recently concluded between Iraq and the UN has triggered changes on the regional political and economic fronts, which have long been governed by the six-year old embargo on Iraq.

Under the agreement, signed in New York this week, Iraq will be allowed to sell $2 billion worth of oil over six months. Iraqis have waited long for a successful conclusion of the negotiations which they see as signalling the beginning of a long march towards a total lift up of what they see as unjust sanctions.

Though disbursement of revenues will be strictly monitored by the UN, many hope this step will help reduce the deteriorating economic situation which deprived Iraqis of their basic needs from food and medicine.

Expectations of what fruits the agreement might eventually yield vary. In Jordan some see it as a step towards a complete lifting of the sanctions, while others doubt it will be effective. "Incongruous opinions about the accord make it hard to come up with full expectation about the future," Senator Jawad al-'Anani, a former minister and an economic expert, told THE STAR. He added that while Iraqi chief negotiator 'Abd-al-Amir al-Anbari looks upon the agreement as a first step towards a complete lifting of the embargo, US UN envoy Madeleine Albright saw it otherwise.

"On the contrary, this partial agreement may protract the possibility of a lasting solution," said Tahir al-'Udwan, a political analyst.

The impact of the deal on Jordan-Iraqi trading relations is still ambiguous. Bilateral trade was lately influenced by incoherent political statements from the two sides. The question remains if the latest deal with the UN will have a bearing on Jordan's commercial ties with Baghdad and the size of Jordanian exports to Iraq especially after the recent downsizing of the commercial protocol between the two countries from about $400 million to $200 million. "The reduction was based on certain economic realities in both Jordan and Iraq," said

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al-'Anani. "Iraq's importing abilities have been severely decreased." The value of the protocol, he added, was sizable in the year before the reduction but in actual fact it was not fully invested by Jordan.

Tension between the two countries escalated recently as the government of Prime Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti attempted to shift Jordan's economic attention from Iraq to the Gulf. This, among other things, has left Jordanians perplexed about their country's true position towards Iraq. Since the Gulf War, Jordan was able to maintain "special" trading ties with Iraq in spite of the UN sanctions. Jordan imports all of its oil needs from Iraq. "The private sector played a significant role in keeping trading relations between Jordan and Iraq alive," said al-'Udwan.

Taysir 'Abd-al-Jabir, a former minister and an economic analyst, told THE STAR that there is a good chance for Jordanian commodities to be exported to Iraq. "Since Saudi Arabia's needs from Jordan in terms of commodities are not the same as those of Iraq, the private sector can work to further expand trading ties," he said.

Although Iraq might dispense with Jordan's goods, shifting to Iran, Turkey, Syria and the Gulf, al-'Anani does not think the "strained relationship" between Iraq and Jordan can lead to a political divorce.

"I do not think that Iraqi oil will be exported through Syria though there have been some trading activities between them through smuggling which might now be legalized," al-'Anani argued. he added that many countries which based their relations with Jordan on the Kingdom's stand towards Iraq will strive in the future to improve their relations with Iraq.

Jordan: Speaker al-Surur Meets With Palestinian Counterpart

JN2305074596 Amman Jordan Television Network in English 1900 GMT 22 May 96

[Announcer-read report over video]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Sa'd Hayil al-Surur met with president of the Palestine National Council, Mr. Salim al-Za'nun. The meeting at the council's offices in Amman dealt with means to activate the work of the special follow-up committee on Jerusalem, which was formed during the extraordinary Arab parliamentary session held in Amman last December.

Al-Surur affirmed the strong brotherly relations between Jordan and the Palestinians, particularly in the regional, Arab, and international parliamentary arenas. Al-Surur also reaffirmed the keenness of the Jordanian parliamentary group to maintain contact and fruitful consultation with the Palestine National Council.

For his part, al-Za'nun said the council very much appreciates his majesty the king's approval of the request to keep the council's headquarters in Amman. Deputies and members of the Palestine National Council also attended the meeting.

Jordan: IAF Calls For New Electoral Law, Other Changes

JN2305083496 Amman THE STAR in English 23-29 May 96 p 2

[From the "Jordan Week" column by Marwan al-Asmar]

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] [passage omitted] The Islamic Action Front (IAF) has been active in sending memorandums to Prime Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti. The latest memo called on the PM to be diligent and forthright. Indeed the memo is something of a blue print for future action. The IAF calls on the government to introduce a new electoral law, in the forthcoming extraordinary parliamentary session, and abolish the current single vote system. The Islamists urge the government to free all political prisoners and stop harassing those who are sympathetic to Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement]. The memo, which was presented by the IAF General Secretary Dr Ishaq al-Farhan, urges the government to allow prisoners full access to lawyers and be allowed visiting rights as stated by the prisons law.

The issue of the Friday sermons was another bone of contention. The IAF wants all preachers who have been banned from delivering Friday sermons to be reinstated. In what could be seen as a disturbing mood by some, the party wants the government to cancel the licenses of night clubs and to close down new coffee bars. It wants stricter control of cinemas and video shops and not to give licenses to new liquor shops.

But the IAF also called on the government not to remove its subsidy on essential commodities such as bread and to reevaluate its decision to increase the prices of water and electricity.

The party stressed that the government provides a working program to deal with employment and poverty.

Surprisingly, the normalization issue with Israel came second place this time. However, the Islamists called on the Prime Minister to bring pressure on the Americans not to hand Hamas leader Musa Abu-Marzuq, who is in a US jail, to Israel. [passage omitted]

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Lebanon: Al-Hariri Notes Need To Keep UNIFIL in South

NC2205170096 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1530 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri said the continued presence of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon [UNIFIL] in southern Lebanon is not under discussion at the negotiations on forming a security committee to monitor the cease-fire under the April Understanding.

He noted that Security Council Resolution 425 stipulated the formation of UNIFIL and its deployment in southern Lebanon. The resolution, he added, defined this force's mission in helping the Lebanese Government deploy its legitimate forces up to the internationally recognized borders.

He remarked that the need for UNIFIL's presence in southern Lebanon will continue as long as Israel refuses to implement Resolution 425 and hinders the application of its provisions. Lebanon, he added, will keep asking the Security Council to implement its unanimously passed resolution and renew the UNIFIL mandate established under that resolution.

He noted however: Although Israel cannot stand the UNIFIL force and thinks the force's presence in the south at its current level curbs Israel's acts of aggression, Lebanon notes the force's neutrality and objectivity and praises their humanitarian efforts during the April aggression. He added: Lebanon also praises UNIFIL's valuable contribution to the relief of civilians who came under Israeli attacks by land, air, and sea with various types of weapons.

Al-Hariri concluded his statement by saying that Lebanon rejects any encroachment on the United Nations' role and denounces any attempt to minimize this role and scale down the UNIFIL's size.

Lebanon: Al-Hirawi—Only Government Should Receive Foreign Aid

NC2305071996 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 0430 GMT 23 May 96

[Statement by Lebanese Information Minister Farid Makari following a cabinet meeting in Beirut on 22 May — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] At the invitation of his excellency the prime minister, the Council of Ministers held its weekly meeting today. His excellency the president attended and chaired the session. At the beginning, his excellency the president noted that certain countries are holding direct contacts with Lebanese citizens, offering them financial or other forms of relief aid [for the victims of the recent Israeli military operation]. His excellency instructed the Council of Ministers that all this aid should be directed to the Lebanese state through the competent government departments, and that to prevent any confusion or speculations regarding the objectives of such aid, foreign countries should contact only the Lebanese state

The Council of Ministers praised speech his excellency the president delivered in Qana on 17 May. In a part of that speech, the president addressed the UN Interim Force in Lebanon, stressing the importance of its role in Lebanon and the need to maintain and support its presence. He said Lebanon needs for this force to carry out its mission, especially the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 425 and 426. [passage omitted]

Lebanon: Israelis, SLA Fire at Southern Areas; Naval Siege Continues

NC2205143096 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1400 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] An Israeli enemy force carried out a large-scale raking operation on the Hasbani-al-Fardis-Jisr al-Shaq'ah axis using large and medium-caliber machine guns.

Agent Antoine Lahd's militia [South Lebanese Army, SLA] in Zummarayya directed large-caliber machine-gun fire at the Jabal al- Dahr hills and ('Ayn 'Ilil), causing fires in wheat fields and olive groves.

The Israeli navy is maintaining its tight blockade of the southern shore, preventing fishermen from earning their daily living.

Lebanon: Israeli Army, SLA Conduct Maneuvers; Commanders Comment

NC2205150796 Kafr Killa Voice of the South in Arabic 1330 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Units from the South Lebanese Army [SLA] and the Israeli army today conducted a joint military maneuver with live ammunition at a training camp in al-Majidiyah. Infantry, tank, artillery, and helicopters took part in the maneuver. SLA Commander Staff Major General Antoine Lahd, Israeli Army Deputy Chief of Staff Gen. [name indistinct], Commander of the Northern Zone Gen. 'Amiram Levin, Commander of the Liaison Unit Gen. Giyora 'Inbar, and senior SLA officers and liaison unit personnel also attended the maneuver.

Maj. Gen. Lahd made a statement in which he said that we must not be complacent with what we have

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achieved so far. He said we are few in number and must compensate for this with competence. He added that good training enhances soldiers competence. He said that no one can overpower us if we realize our tasks and believe in our goals—security, safeguarding Lebanese territory in this area, and working for peace. He noted that there is a common interest between us and Israel, particularly in safeguarding security, coexistence, and fighting terrorists who serve the interests of foreign countries and not that of Lebanon. He said that Lebanon and the Lebanese have nothing to do with these interests.

Gen. Levin said that Hizballah must realize that we will not allow it to continue its attacks against the SLA, the Israeli army, the border strip, and north Israel. He said we are seeking to achieve peace, but a sound and permanent peace can only be realized by those who know how to fight for peace and make sacrifices for it. Addressing the soldiers who participated in the maneuvers, he said if we fight together we will obtain peace from a position of strength.

Responding to a question by our correspondent on whether he believes that the two terrorists who were killed in the Arnun area last Sunday morning started from Yuhmur, Gen. Levin said: I not only believe but confirm that they started from a home in Yuhmur and we photographed them from the moment they left the town until they were killed. We have these photos. He said that what happened is considered a violation of the April understanding by the terrorists. He said: The limited Israeli response to this violation cannot be considered as a standard for our response in the future.

Discussing the accusations by Syria, the Lebanese Government, and Hizballah of Israel of violating the understanding, Gen. Levin said: Let them say what they want, they are not right. We have photos of a terrorist cell of three persons and they started from Yuhmur. We killed two and the third fled to Yuhmur.

Asked if he expects Hizballah to escalate its terrorist operations against the SLA and the Israeli army, Gen. Levin said: Hizballah will try this because the agreement reached after Operation Grapes of Wrath is not a peace agreement, but one to keep civilians away from the conflict. He said: We will overcome Hizballah whether it starts its attacks from the villages or outside. He praised the good standard demonstrated by the soldiers who participated in today's maneuvers.

Gen. 'Inbar said that he heard the Voice of Light this morning speak of the dismantling of the SLA and, therefore, said that the presence of journalists, photographers, and this large number of officers and soldiers here to watch these maneuvers are the best answer to this radio's claims.

Lebanon: Al-Hirawi Receives Mubarak's Message on Ties, Peace

NC2305112596 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1030 GMT 23 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] President Ilyas al-Hirawi and Egyptian Ambassador in Beirut 'Adil al-Khudari reviewed Lebanese and Arab developments at a meeting this morning. The Egyptian ambassador said after the meeting that he delivered a message to President al- Hirawi from Egyptian President Muhammad Husni Mubarak on bilateral ties, the current Arab situation, and issues of mutual concern, especially the issue of a just, comprehensive, and hoped-for peace. He said he received a message from President al-Hirawi in reply, but he did not disclose its contents.

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Syria: 'Purely Technical' Role Urged for Monitoring Committee

JN2205120196 Damascus SYRIA TIMES in English 21 May 96 p 5

[Editorial by Fuad Mardud: "The Talks in Washington"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] With the current round of the Lebanon Understanding talks in Washington, the nature and mechanism of work of the monitoring committee should be fixed and settled. The committee which comprises Syria, Lebanon, France, the United States and Israel is scheduled to have begun its field work soon after ceasefire.

The systematic Israeli attacks on Lebanon were barbaric and should come to a halt. The understanding, reached on 26 April, that effectively ended Israel's 17-day war on Lebanon does not mean the Israeli acts of aggression on Lebanese civilians should go unnoticed and unpunished.

In theory at least, setting up the proposed committee to monitor the "Lebanon Understanding" would provide the civilians in Lebanon with their first reliable protection. Beyond that, the stalled peace talks, which are likely to be resumed after elections in Israel later this month, can offer ways for achieving durable peace.

The best immediate prospect for ending the state of war and hostility is the immediate resumption of the Middle East peace talks.

For Israel, it has been traditional during the long years of the Arab-Israeli conflict to strike somewhere, mainly in South Lebanon, before every election and it seems that there are no statutes of limitations governing poll tactics in Israel. Dirty tricks inside and escalating attacks outside are systematically used by all Israeli leaders to hit scores in the race.

This does not mean, by any means, that the latest war on Lebanon was confined to the game of elections alone. Waging attacks on civilians in Lebanon was a daily routine during the past fifteen years. But the latest aggression and the massacre at Qana U.N. post added sense that slaughter and reprisal are not necessarily going to end neatly even if the proposed monitoring committee is soon set up and achieved, especially if the nature and mechanism of that committee have not precisely been defined.

Syria, France, Lebanon and even the U.S. to some extent, have a pretty good answer: do not mix politics with the purely technical job of that committee, and work separately to resume the peace negotiations soon. Politics should not enter the stage of that committee's work.

Polls in Israel and the U.S. should not have any negative effects on the work of both, even if the government in Israel is not in a strong position to police the pledge of peace and yet to make Shim'on Peres pay.

The monitoring committee has to be established within days. The continued Israeli aggression on civilians in Lebanon has to be stopped. The committee's duties and ways of work must be negotiated within a purely technical frame if success is to be secured.

Syria: Commentary Accuses Israel of Continued 'Violation' of April Understanding

JN2205154996 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1138 GMT 22 May 96

[Station commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] Israel continues its violation of the April understanding on the cease-fire in southern Lebanon. Its ships intercept Lebanese fishermen; its planes violate Lebanese airspace; and its artillery shell civilian areas, which led to the wounding of a woman. The Lebanese resistance did not react to these violations out of their commitment to the understanding.

However, Israel not only violates the understanding on the ground, but also continues to hinder the possibility of finalizing the agreement and implementing it. This is clear in its position on the negotiations currently underway in Washington on the formation of a committee that will monitor the cease-fire. Israel, through this behavior, emphasizes its lack of commitment to the agreement. It also wants to separate the monitoring committee, which is the essence of the understanding, from the understanding itself.

This Israeli position leads to only one possible condition for the region: heightened tension and lack of peace in the Middle East. The United States, which does not conceal its support for the Israeli position, had to admit that violence endangers peace, while the understanding is a bridge toward peace. We support this statement.

However, the party responsible for violence, tension, and the absence of an understanding should be named. The occupation represents violence and is a major cause of tension. The understanding means an agreement to deter violence and the shedding of blood. It can in no way mean imposing occupation and one side's conditions while ignoring the rights of others. Israel is the occupying party and it practices violence and terrorism through occupation, violation of understandings, and bypassing of international legitimacy. It does not want the understanding to become a means of bridling the aggression and a bridge toward peace. It wants it to serve as a

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vehicle to consecrate the occupation and impose its control, hegemony, and conditions. It wants it to be a bridge to overpass the principles and foundations of peace and the Madrid conference and its terms of reference — that is, international legitimacy and its resolutions and the U.S. initiative, which is based on the land-for peace principle. It wants to achieve what it failed to accomplish through military means.

This Israeli position contradicts the logic of life and history and international desire and efforts to establish peace in the region. The April understanding is clear and plainly provides for the right of the resistance to combat the occupation. The understanding also clearly calls for not killing civilians. The work of the monitoring committee is restricted to overseeing the extent of commitment to this.

If Israel really wants peace, then it should abide by the provisions and limits of the understanding and adhere to the resolutions of international legitimacy, which are the groundwork and foundation of peace. This means ending the occupation and withdrawing from all of the Golan and southern Lebanon. Only then can a just and comprehensive peace be achieved — peace that will replace the understanding and the monitoring committee and can become a solid basis for security and stability in the region.

Proceeding from keenness on peace and awareness of its importance and role in shaping the present and future of the region, the United States, as a sponsor of and partner in the peace process, and the entire international community should adhere to international legitimacy and the foundations of peace, which are based on this legitimacy. This will pave the way for security and stability in the region and the world.

Syria: Paper Says Israel Obstructs Formation of April Committee

JN2205204396 Damascus SANA in Arabic 0730 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Damascus, 22 May (SANA)— The newspaper AL-THAWRAH says: If the meetings held to set up the April Understanding committee and identify its prerogatives, structure, and level of representation are taking all this time because of the complications Israel is placing in the path of the states concerned, then what would the situation be with regard to the process of achieving comprehensive peace which the entire region cherishes?

In an article today by Dr. Fayiz al-Sayigh, director general of the SYRIAN ARAB NEWS AGENCY, the paper says: Once again, all the obstacles and impediments which Israel and the Israeli negotiator have been placing to obstruct the peace process and hinder the formation of the committee to be charged with sponsoring the April Understanding, show that the Israeli policies are not based on logic, law, or the rules of resolving disputes and conflicts. Rather, they seek to enable one Israeli official to remain in office, or another official to assume power. The Israeli policies are governed by the rules of a domestic game which involves no one but its players. The paper asserts that in light of this established fact, the possible remedies remain partial and incomplete and will not lead to any meaningful results but to the entrenchment of the policy of beating a dead horse.

The paper adds: Here lies the importance of the U.S. role, which we assume to be pivotal. Not only is the U.S. Administration familiar with the April Understanding, but it also played an obvious role in formulating this understanding word by word. This understanding gave the resistance the right to adopt its own means of defending the land and liberating the soil.

The paper wonders: This being the case, why then are the meetings of the committee and its sessions — in which the United States is participating — taking all this time? Is it not time to rectify matters and dot the i's and cross the t's?

Concluding its comment, AL-THAWRAH asserts: Such a matter should not be subject to the circumstances of the Israeli elections but rather to international responsibility; and to be more specific, to the responsibility of the sponsor who is seeking a just and comprehensive peace, to quote the U.S. officials themselves.

Syria: U.S. Urged To 'Restore Credibility' to Peace Sponsorship Role

JN2305080496 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0455 GMT 23 May 96

[From the press review]

[FBIS Translated Text] In an editorial headlined "An Urgent Task," the newspaper AL-THAWRAH says: Those who follow the details of the peace process have never doubted Syria's serious and practical stand toward achieving a just and comprehensive peace.

The paper stresses that the world is convinced of the true nature of the Syrian stand, which has proved its credibility toward a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

The paper explains: Israel continues to be the party that rejects the principles and requirements of peace, using pretexts, planting mines, and setting traps during the negotiating rounds in order to torpedo the peace efforts.

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AL-THAWRAH says: The United States, which is playing the role of the main peace cosponsor, has failed to persuade Israel to respond to the requirements and objectives of peace.

It notes that Israel has continued to be the United States' spoiled child, even during the aggression that led to a human catastrophe in Lebanon.

AL-THAWRAH calls on the international community to end the aggressive Israeli extremism that opens the door to treacherous possibilities that might push the region toward the point of explosion. AL-THAWRAH calls on the international community to intensify its action to end Israel's intransigence, its officials' conceit, and its generals' arrogance and to restore prestige to the peace process in accordance with the Madrid bases and principles. The U.S. Administration, as a peace cosponsor, should restore credibility to its role in establishing peace and forcing Israel to abide by the resolutions of the international legitimacy and the requirements of peace.

Syria: Israeli Electoral Campaign Dubbed 'Conflict Among Wolves'

JN2205205096 Damascus SANA in Arabic 0720 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Damascus, 22 May (SANA) — The newspaper TISHRIN describes the electoral campaigns in Israel as a conflict among wolves, noting the heightening conflict which frequently evolves into mutual violence between the supporters of the Likud and the Labor parties.

In a commentary today, the newspaper says: It is possible for us not to pay any attention to the Israeli elections, because this is an internal affair. However, we cannot ignore these elections when concepts and issues pertinent to security, peace, and the Arab rights and territories are involved and become subject to Israeli violations, encroachments, outbidding, extremism, and fanaticism with a view to devouring more Arab territories.

The paper goes on to say: The Israeli officials, who beg the voters for the sake of their political platforms, ideas, and proposals realize that aggression, racism, and usurpation of rights will never provide them security, for violence only breeds violence. All events have proven that Israel reaped nothing but failure from its aggression, terrorism, and sway over Arabs. It is about time to put an end to the calamities, tragedies, and disasters the region has experienced, because of the Israeli terrorism, occupation, and arrogance.

Concluding its commentary, TISHRIN calls on the Israeli parties, movements, and organizations to draw lessons from the experiments and events in which these parties were entrapped. It urges the Israeli parties to respond to the requirements and principles of a just and comprehensive peace.

Syria: Vice President Khaddam Confers With Iraqi Kurdish Official

JN2205205696 (Clandestine) Voice of Iraqi Kurdistan in Arabic 1800 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Syrian Vice President 'Abd-al-Halim Khaddam received in his private office in Damascus on 21 May 'Umar Butani, member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party [KDP] Executive Committee and official in charge of the KDP office in Damascus. Discussion during the fraternal meeting focused on the strong ties between our party and the Syrian Arab Republic. Mr. Khaddam praised the results of leader Barzani's visit to Damascus and voiced his government's satisfaction with these results. Khaddam also spoke on his visit to Tehran. At the conclusion of the meeting, Khaddam asked Butani to convey to Leader Barzani his greetings and the greetings of the Syrian Government.

Syria: Argentine Minister Conveys Message From Menem to al-Asad

JN2205201196 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1115 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Comrade 'Abdallah al-Ahmar, assistant secretary general of the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party and head of the Pan-Arab Committee on Arab Expatriates, received Domingo Liota, Argentine minister of scientific and technological research at the Argentine Presidency [name and title as heard], who is taking part in the first meeting of the delegation of Arab and American graduates from the scientific and professional institutes in Latin American countries. The meeting was attended by Dr. Urasyu Haddad, head of the Federation of Arab-American Establishments.

The two sides discussed relations between Syria and Argentina, particularly cooperation ties between the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party and the Argentine Peronist Justice Party. [passage omitted]

The Argentine minister handed al-Ahmar a message from the Argentine President Carlos Menem to His Excellency President Hafiz al-Asad. He asked al-Ahmar to convey the greetings of President Menem to His Excellency President Hafiz al-Asad. Comrade al-Ahmar received the message and asked Domingo Liota to convey his best regards and wishes to President Carlos Menem. [passage omitted]

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Afghanistan

Afghanistan: Hezb-e Eslami To Remain in High Coordination Council

LD2205170196 (Clandestine) Radio Message of Freedom in Pashto to Afghanistan 0730 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] My party is an active member of the High Coordination Council [HCC] and will continue to be a member of the Council. This point was expressed by Ghayrat Bahir, head of the Hezb-e Eslami [Islamic Party] office in Islamabad. He said: Our talks with Jam'iyat-e Eslami [Islamic Society] does not mean that we are leaving the council. We have always informed the council about progress in the talks and have continued negotiations with the government in Kabul.

Answering a question he said: Hezb-e Eslami's stance has always been to ensure security in Afghanistan and to pave the way for the establishment of a representative government acceptable to all Afghans. Answering another question Mr. Bahir said: In principle our understanding with the government does not mean that we will open a joint battle front against any other party or will prolong the fighting in Afghanistan. Our aim is to take steps toward peace and security and to end the current misery in Afghanistan; to establish a representative government, and to free the Afghans from their current misery.

According to another report, the HCC meeting has ended in Mazar-e Sharif. However, the official statement of the meeting has not yet been published. It is hoped that very soon the HCC will issue a statement about its stand on the current talks between the Hezb-e Eslami and the Kabul administration.

Afghanistan: Fighting Continues Around Kabul; 'Dozens' of Taleban Killed

LD2205164896 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Heavy fighting has been taking place today in the southeast of Kabul Province. During the fighting Islamic army forces inflicted heavy loss of life on the Taleban.

Responsible sources reported that a number of Taleban fighters have been captured. The fighting started with an exchange of heavy weapons fire this morning and intensified about midday. The Islamic army forces also reported that dozens of Taleban fighters were killed during the fighting and that their bodies litter the front lines. A quantity of the Taleban's light and heavy weapons has also been captured.

Another report says that the Taleban fired rockets into residential areas today. No report has yet been received about casualties and fatalities related to the rocket attack.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh: Delhi—More Officers Arrested; Dhaka Base 'Somewhat Tense'

BK2205005596 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1530 GMT 21 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In Bangladesh, a court of inquiry is being instituted to fix responsibility for the defiant activities of some army officers, including the sacked army chief. This was announced in Dhaka this evening. Major General Mahbubur Rahman, who has taken over as the chief of the army staff; the navy chief, Rear Admiral Nurul Islam; and the air force chief, Air Commodore Shamsher Ali, met the president, Abdur Rahman Biswas, at Bangabhaban in Dhaka today. Our Dhaka correspondent has the details:

[Begin recording] Most of the misled army personnel, who had left Bogra and Mymensingh cantonments yesterday and were proceeding toward Dhaka, have gone back to their barracks. It is reported that negotiations are on with some troops at Mymensingh.

The situation in Dhaka cantonment is somewhat tense. The sacked army chief, Lieutenant General Nasim, is now in protective custody there. Maj. Gen. G.H. Morshed Khan and five other army officials have also been arrested. There are some unconfirmed reports of clashes at Ghazipur, Bogra, and Mymensingh cantonments. Army and tanks continue to be deployed at strategic places of capital Dhaka. Several contingents of the Army are on position at Aricha Ghat and Nagarbari Ghat. The ferry services continue to remain suspended. Vehicular traffic on some highways is mostly off the road. Bandopadhyay reporting from Dhaka. [end recording]

Bangladesh: Awami League Sees Conspiracy in Removal of Army Chief

BK2305031196 Dhaka THE DAILY STAR in English 21 May 96 p 1

[Report by Correspondent]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Awami League [AL] last night termed the removal of the Army Chief of Staff "a part of the deep rooted conspiracy of the ousted BNP [Bangladesh Nationalist Party] government to sabotage the forthcoming elections."

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An emergency meeting of the AL Central Election Co-ordination Committee [ALCECC] said, "We condemn and protest this deep conspiracy to sabotage the coming free, fair and impartial election, and urge the countrymen to build up united resistance against this ploy."

With ALCECC Co-Chairperson Shah A.M.S. Kibria in the chair, the meeting held at the Dhanmondi Office of the Committee, was attended by its Co-Chairperson Gaziul Haq, member-secretary Dr. Mohammed Selim and members Sayed Ahmed, Majharul Islam, Mafizur Rahman, Dr. Azad Chowdhury, Borhan Uddin Khan Jahangir, Monaem Sarker, Nurul Fazal Bulbul, Advocate Abdul Mannan Khan and Dr. Harun-ur-Rashid, says a press release.

After taking stock of the current situation, the ALCECC in a resolution said, "we are observing with deep concern that after a lot of sacrifices when the whole nation was advancing towards a free and fair election to consolidate democracy, the toppled BNP, sensing its defeat indulged into a conspiracy to destroy democracy and deprive people of their rights to vote in a very planned manner."

Begum Khaleda Zia and the ousted BNP has been trying to make the caretaker government nonfunctional through its biased President Abdur Rahman Biswas, it said.

The resolution also pointed out that the sudden forced retirement of the two senior army officers by the President and the removal of the Chief of Army Staff "on various pretexts" 22 days ahead of elections are the continuation of the ongoing conspiracy.

Bangladesh: Agencies Asked To Safeguard Law, Order During Election

BK2305020696 Dhaka Radio Bangladesh Network in Bengali 1500 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The government has directed law enforcement agencies to take all steps to ensure law and order during the coming parliamentary election. The direction was given at a meeting of the advisory committee on law and order and national broadcasting in Dhaka today. The meeting chaired by Dr. Mohammad Yunus, convener of the committee, was attended by other committee members. The meeting was informed that so far more than 2,500 firearms have been recovered and more than 1,100 people arrested under the Arms and Explosives Act. In addition, more than 30,000 people have been arrested on various charges. The meeting directed the district magistrates to seek the cooperation of local administrative bodies, educational intuitions, nongovernmental organizations, and various social and cultural organizations in maintaining law and order and persuading the large number of women voters to exercise their franchise.

Chief Election Commissioner Abu Hena has said that all preparations are under way for the ensuing 12 June parliamentary elections. He was addressing a meeting of local political leaders and prominent figures in Rajshahi today. The chief election commissioner said that if any report of vote rigging or unlawful activities is received from any voting booths, then voting in those booths will be canceled. He said that there is no alternative to free elections if the democratic process in the country is to be maintained. Hena sought the cooperation of all political parties and people and the media in conducting the ensuing elections in a free, fair, and impartial manner. He, however, said that arms recovered so far are insufficient. He said that the law enforcement agencies have been directed to further accelerate this drive.

The chief election commissioner said that the arrest of terrorists and possessors of illegal arms will continue irrespective of their party affiliation;, however, no innocent person will be harassed. He emphasized that the election code of conduct will be strictly implemented and there will be no hesitation about taking the necessary steps in this regard. The meeting was also attended by senior officers of the district. Our Rajshahi correspondent said that earlier the chief election commissioner inaugurated a training workshop for election-related officials at Rajshahi Postal Academy.

India

India: 11th Lok Sabha Swearing-In; Janata Dal Seeks No-Confidence

BK2205165396 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1530 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Swearing-in of new members marked the opening day of the first session of the eleventh Lok Sabha today. Nearly 500 members from different states and union territories took the oath amid greetings by party colleagues and others. The remaining members will take the oath tomorrow. The new Lok Sabha assembled at 1100 this morning in a cordial atmosphere. Our parliamentary correspondent, M.P. Radhakrishnan, reports.

[Begin Radhakrishnan recording] The new house presented a totally different picture from the earlier, tenth Lok Sabha. The prime minister, Mr. Vajpayee, exchanged seats with the former prime minister, Mr. Narasimha Rao, who is now the leader of the opposition. For the first time, members belonging to the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] and its allies occupied the treasury benches. Many of the new members came in their

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traditional attire. There were turbans of different colors with the Shiv Sena members sporting saffron and the Akali Dal members wearing blue. Several members preferred Sanskrit or their regional languages while taking the oath. [end recording]

The pro tem speaker, Mr. Indrajit Gupta, who earlier administered the oath by the president at Rashtrapati Bhavan [president's house] welcomed the newly elected members saying that they have been charged with great responsibilities for the welfare of the people. The prime minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, was the first to take oath as a member of the house followed by the leader of the opposition, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao. They were followed by the cabinet ministers and the three members of the panel of chairpersons to assist the pro tem speaker — Mrs. Vijeraje Scindia, Mr. Chitta Basu, and Mr. P.M. Sayeed. Thereafter, the members were called as per the alphabetical order of the states they were elected from.

Earlier, in the morning the members stood in silence for a short while to mark the solemn occasion of the first sitting of the new Lok Sabha. The secretary general of the house laid on the table a book presented by the Election Commission containing the names of the elected members. Our parliamentary correspondent reports that the brief session is crucial for the Vajpayee government as it has to seek a confidence vote in the house by the 31st of this month. The election of the new speaker is scheduled for tomorrow. The Congress and the United Front have considered a common candidate, former union minister, Mr. P.A. Sangma, for the post. As there is no other candidate in the fray, the election of Mr. Sangma as speaker seems certain. Mr. Sangma filed his nomination papers today.

The Atal Behari Vajpayee government is likely to seek a vote of confidence on Monday in the Lok Sabha. The Janata Dal today gave a notice expressing lack of confidence in the BJP government in a bid to prevent it from transacting any official business. The Janata Dal sources said the motion is likely to be moved by the party leader, Mr. Ram Vilas Paswan, immediately after the president's address on Friday.

The BJP National Executive has decided to observe Honor-the- Mandate Day on Saturday throughout the country. In a press release, the party vice president, Mr. K. Jana Krishnamurthy, alleged that the left parties and the Janata Dal after being worsted in the polls are trying their best to gather regional parties to bring down the BJP government. He claimed that the BJP will frustrate their attempts.

The Indian National Congress has reiterated its unconditional support to the United Front-Left Front combine. Talking to newspersons in New Delhi today, the party spokesman, Mr. V.N. Gadgil, said the fall of the BJP government is imminent, as nobody among the United Front and the Indian National Congress is going to support it on the confidence motion in the Lok Sabha. He said the party president, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, has decided to quit the Nandyal Lok Sabha constituency in Andhra Pradesh and will represent Berhampur in Orissa in the eleventh Lok Sabha.

The prime minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, retained the Lucknow seat and resigned from the Gandhinagar Lok Sabha constituency in Gujarat. This was announced by the pro tem speaker, Mr. Indrajit Gupta, in the Lok Sabha. The Janata Dal leader, Mr. Biju Patnaik, has retained the Aska Lok Sabha seat and resigned from the Cuttack constituency. Both the resignations have been accepted.

The United Front parliamentary party today formally elected Mr. H.D. Deve Gowda as their leader. His name was proposed by the CPI-M [Communist Party of India-Marxist] parliamentary party leader, Mr. Somnath Chatterjee, and seconded by the leaders of the constituent parties of the front. After being unanimously elected, Mr. Gowda said if invited to form the government, his top priority will be to check the rise of communal forces and maintain the secular and federal character of the country. He promised to implement the Sarcaria commission's recommendations on devolution of powers to the states. Mr. Deve Gowda said that the various tricky issues, including water and boundary disputes between states, will be solved by talks among the senior leaders of the front.

India: Congress' Sangma Elected Lok Sabha Speaker Uncontested

BK2305075696 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0730 GMT 23 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Mr. P.A. Sangma of the Indian National Congress has been unanimously elected speaker of the 11th Lok Sabha. Thirteen motions were moved in favor of Mr. Sangma by members belonging to the Congress and the United Front. One of the motions was moved by the leader of the Congress, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, and seconded by Mr. Sharad Pawar. As there was no other candidate on the field, Mr. Sangma was elected speaker by a voice vote.

Welcoming the new speaker, the prime minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, said that the unanimous election of Mr. Sangma is an indication of the fact that despite political differences, members of the house can be one on important issues. Pledging full cooperation to the new speaker, the prime minister stressed the need to maintain the dignity of the house.

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The leader of the opposition, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, recalled the services of Mr. P.A. Sangma as labor minister during his prime ministership. Later, Mr. Sangma was escorted to the chair by Mr. Vajpayee, Mr. Narasimha Rao, and leaders of various political parties in the house.

India: Speaker Rejects Plea for Early No-Confidence Motion

BK2305091996 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0830 GMT 23 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Lok Sabha speaker today disallowed a plea that the no-confidence motion against the Vajpayee government should be taken up before the president's address tomorrow. Rejecting the plea, Mr. Sangma held that the Constitution is very clear that no business of the house can be transacted before the president's address. He said the actual session commences only with the address of the president to the joint sitting of both the houses. He ruled that oath-taking by the MP's cannot be termed as the business of the house. Earlier, raising the issue, Mr. Ram Vilas Paswan of the Janata Dal said that he has given a notice of no-confidence motion against the government and it should be taken up before the president's address.

India: Opposition Agrees on Strategy for Ousting BJP Government

BK2305122296 Hong Kong AFP in English 1206 GMT 23 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] New Delhi, May 23 (AFP) — The Indian opposition rallied Thursday [23 May] behind plans to boot out the country's first Hindu nationalist government next Monday, but left unresolved how it would settle internal differences after taking power.

Ousted premier P.V. Narasimha Rao's Congress (I) pledged it would back the United Front — a coalition of leftist and centrist parties — but stay out of its government if the Front came to power.

"We will give unconditional support to the United Front, but we will stay out of the government," Congress MP Santosh Mohan Dev, who is also the party's chief whip in parliament, told AFP.

Dev and his colleague Margaret Alva said differences over political ideology and programmes would be sorted out after the coalition ousted the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party) government.

"Our aim is to bring down the BJP government on Monday," added Alva, a top Congress leader. But he hinted the Congress was likely to impose "preconditions" after paving the way for Front leader H.K. Deve Gowda to stake claim to power.

Indian President Shankar Dayal Sharma has given beleaguered BJP prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee until May 31 to prove his party's legislative majority in the 545-seat Lok Sabha, or lower house, or bow out of office.

The BJP, which took office on May 16, and its four tiny allies command 194 MPs in the Lok Sabha, while the historically-dominant Congress, the United Front and regional parties boast more than 300 MPs.

The BJP put up a bold front on Thursday, saying its eight-day-old government was confident of proving its majority in the fractured parliament that emerged from the April-May general elections.

"With the help of Rama we will win the confidence vote. We are unstoppable," firebrand BJP leader B.L. Sharma said of the party's faith in the mythological Hindu warrior-god.

The BJP has vowed to fulfil its powderkeg electoral promise of constructing a grand temple to Rama on the rubble of the Babri mosque in the northern town of Ayodhya, destroyed by Hindu zealots in 1992.

The Hindu-revivalist party, however, stayed out of a race to elect a speaker to Lok Sabha as the opposition on Thursday named Rao's former information minister, Purno Sangma, as the new incumbent to the top legislative post.

BJP MPs held their silence in the lower house as opposition and Congress members approved Sangma's election during a voice vote.

Vajpayee had decided against racing for the speaker's office since a contest leading to an early legislative showdown and eventually the collapse of the BJP government.

The Lok Sabha speaker is usually elected from the ruling party. The top legislative post gives the government a vital edge in day- to-day [word indistinct].

The election further emboldened the United Front combine which said leaders of the opposition would meet later Thursday to plan the final assault on the BJp to boot its government out of the office.

Vajpayee, 69, hinted this week that his BJP government would not survive the confidence vote during the current session, the first after the April-May elections left a hung parliament.

"Whatever the decision of the house, I shall take it in my stride," Vajpayee was quoted as saying, adding that

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the BJP was still attempting to woo regional parties in the house.

Vajpayee also described himself as an "interim prime minister," indicating that his days as the nation's 10th premier were numbered.

India: Report on Congress' Options in Forming Next Government

BK2305062396 Madras THE HINDU in English 22 May 96 p 11

[Report by Harish Khare]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] With the expected demise of the Atal Behari Vajpayee government in the next ten days, the question that is nagging the political community is whether the Congress could stake its claim to succeed the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] government. The question may be slightly academic now that Mr. H.D. Deve Gowda will get elected as the leader of the United Front, and the chances are rather dim that the president would be asking Mr. Narasimha Rao, as the leader of the second largest party, to form the next government. But the Congressmen themselves are a divided lot on the desirability of forming the government.

There are those like the former Minister, Mr. S.S. Ahluwalia, who are reportedly convinced that Mr. Narasimha Rao would be unfurling the national flag atop the Red Fort next Independence Day. The "junior" crowd around Mr. Narasimha Rao that made hay while his prime ministerial sun shone, refuses to believe he cannot manoeuvre his way back into South Block.

This impulse that Mr. Narasimha Rao should try his best to get back his old job has been reinforced by the indiscreet utterances of the Union Law minister, Mr. Ram Jethmalani. Perhaps it was a deliberate ploy on the part of Mr. Jethmalani that backfired and sent all the Congressmen scurrying to Mr. Narasimha Rao's defence. In any case, the law minister has pretty much ensured that the Congress voted against the BJP government — irrespective of Mr. Narasimha Rao's personal predilections.

Then there is the former prime minister's reputation for conjuring up parliamentary majorities out of thin air. The average Congressman believes that if Mr. Narasimha Rao puts his mind to it, he can cobble together a majority as and when, if at all, asked by the president to form the government. In addition, there is the complication of internal power struggle in the Congress. Without the prop of a prime ministership, it is anybody's guess how Mr. Narasimha Rao would be able to cope with his detractors. Old timers recall how difficult it was even for a Rajiv Gandhi to assert himself in the party after losing the prime ministership; during the short-lived Chandra Shekhar regime, a number of senior party men like the late Dinesh Singh were reported to have been ready to cross over to Mr. Chandra Shekhar's side.

However, the seasoned advisers in the former prime minister's camp believe that any talk of "Narasimha Rao is coming back" ought to be avoided at all cost. They know that all the anti-Narasimha Rao forces within and outside the Congress would instantly pool their resources to nip such an eventuality in the bud, even if it means continuation of the Vajpayee government for sometime. Those like Mr. G.K. Moopanar and Mr. Chandrababu Naidu will be forced to rethink their strategy in case there was a chance of Mr. Narasimha Rao getting his old job back.

The carefully crafted facade then is to pretend that Mr. Narasimha Rao has no interest in trying his hand at forming the next government and point to the resolution of the Congress Working Committee that seemingly commits the party to supporting Mr. Deve Gowda's claim to form the next government. It is now up to the president to uphold or not to uphold that claim.

"We will not stake our claim although we are at number two," insisted Mr. Gulam Nabi Azad, former civil aviation minister and a member of the Congress Working Committee [CWC]. Talking to reporters in Srinagar, Mr. Azad reportedly added that "we have already made it known that we will support the United Front to form the government once the BJP rule collapses."

For now, the official stance will be to reiterate the May 12 resolution of the CWC. Even any talk of some kind of Congress participation in a coalition arrangement will be discouraged. Privately every effort will be made to keep all options open — as well as to keep intact the stranglehold on the leadership.

India: Congress Vows 'Unconditional' Support to Third Front

BK2205131696 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1230 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Indian National Congress has reiterated its unconditional support to the National Front-Left Front combine. Talking to newspersons in New Delhi today, the party spokesman, Mr. V.N. Gadgil, said the fall of the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] government is imminent, as nobody among the United Front and the Indian National Congress is going to support it on the confidence motion in the Lok Sabha.

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He said the party president, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, has decided to quit Nandyal Lok Sabha constituency in Andhra Pradesh and will represent Berhampur in Orissa in the eleventh Lok Sabha.

India: Vajpayee Shocked at Rajasthan Bus Bombing; 20 Killed

BK2205145296 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1430 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In Rajasthan, at least 20 persons were killed and many others injured in a powerful bomb blast in a Rajasthan Roadways bus near Samleti village in Dausa District on the Agra-Jaipur National Highway this afternoon. According to the police, the ill-fated bus was going from Agra to Bikaner via Jaipur. Reports say the explosion was so powerful that the roof of the bus was blown up and the fuel tank caught fire. The injured were rushed to the nearby hospital. Medical teams were also rushed to the spot.

The prime minister has expressed deep shock and anguish at the explosion. Conveying heartfelt sympathies to the victims of the tragedy, Mr. Vajpayee directed the authorities to rush immediate relief to them. He said perpetrators of such crime will be brought to book.

India: Home Minister Holds Pakistan Responsible for Delhi Blast

BK2205160096 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1530 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The home minister, Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, has said that Pakistan, through its agents, is responsible for the dastardly and cowardly act of the bomb blast in South Delhi yesterday. In a statement in New Delhi today, Dr. Joshi said that Pakistan-sponsored elements have resorted to attacking soft targets in the country, having failed in their efforts to stop the electoral process in Jammu and Kashmir. The home minister said that the government is in possession of clear evidence that Pakistan agencies planned a high intensity explosion through a car bomb in a market.

The home minister and the home secretary have separately reviewed the investigations being made and the preventive measures being taken by the police. Meanwhile, the Delhi police commissioner has announced a reward of 1 lakh rupees to anyone who will provide information leading to the arrest of those involved in the incident.

The Delhi police today announced that only 13 persons were killed and 39 were injured in yesterday's blast. Meanwhile, the Delhi government has ordered an inquiry into yesterday's bomb blast. The union health and family welfare minister, Mr. Sartaj Singh, today visited the victims of the blast. The Communist Party of India has strongly condemned the blast. The All Parties Hurriyat Conference [of Kashmir] has also condemned the killing of innocent persons.

India: Official Accuses Pakistan of Involvement in Delhi Blast

BK2205080496 Hong Kong AFP in English 0753 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] NEW DELHI, May 22 (AP) — India pinned the blame on Pakistan Wednesday [22 May] for a car-bomb blast in a New Delhi market Tuesday that claimed at least 20 lives and injured 50 others.

Home Secretary K. Padmanabhiah told AFP that the explosion, which occurred shortly after India marked the fifth anniversary of premier Rajiv Gandhi's assassination as "anti-terrorism day," was masterminded by Islamabad.

"We see the hand of Pakistan," he said. "We have concrete proof of their involvement. Security is being stepped up. It will be an ongoing process."

Pakistan and India routinely trade accusations of involvement in terror attacks on their soils. In Pakistan, around 137 people have been killed in a series of unresolved attacks in the past seven months.

The Jammu and Kashmir Islamic Front separatist group late Tuesday claimed responsibility saying the Lashkar-E-Sajjad unit — named after rebel leader Sajjad Keno who was slain by Indian troops in January — had carried out the attack.

India: Police Claim Progress in Probe Into Delhi Blast

BK2305054396 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0245 GMT 23 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In Rajasthan, the additional director general of police, Mr. Ashok Bhandari, will head the team investigating the powerful bomb blast in a State Roadways bus near Mahuva in Dausa District yesterday killing 14 persons. The chief minister, Mr. Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, told newsmen in Jaipur that experts from Delhi will assist in the investigation. He said 26 injured persons have been brought to Jaipur for treatment. Seven others have been admitted to Mahuva and Dausa hospitals. The condition of four of the injured is serious. The state government has announced an ex gratia payment of one lakh rupees each to the next of kin of those killed in the blast. Ten thousand rupees will be paid to those seriously injured.

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The Delhi police have claimed considerable progress in the probe into Tuesday's bomb blast in Lajpat Nagar market in South Delhi. They have launched a massive manhunt to nab the culprits. The additional commissioner of police, Southern range, said in New Delhi that the vehicle suspected to have carried the explosive device has already been identified. The Maruti car in which the explosion took place was stolen from Nizamuddin area. The security agencies have also gathered solid evidence to prove that the blast was the handiwork of Pakistan-aided terrorists who had chosen to go for a soft target outside the Kashmir valley, where they fail to do anything in view of the security forces pressure. Meanwhile, the center has approved certain proposals of the Delhi government for decentralization of administration and beefing up of Delhi police.

India: Pakistani Troops Fire as Voting Continues in Kashmir

BK2305122096 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1135 GMT 23 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Latest reports from the Kashmir valley put the overall percentage of voting in Anantnag parliamentary constituency at 32 percent and in Baramula at 25 percent. Sangash assembly segment has recorded 45 percent, Pahlgam and Kokarnag 40 percent each. Thirty percent voters have exercised their franchise in Nurabad and Bijbiara. It was 35 percent in Devsar and 27 percent in Anantnag. Mensali Bagh has recorded 28 percent and 20 percent in Kulgam assembly segment.

Pakistani troops fired from across the Line of Control in Tithwal sector of the Kashmir valley without causing any damage even as polling was going on in different constituencies of Baramula and Anantnag. In Chhatta, Uri sector, firing from across the Line of Control led to suspension of polling for some time.

Security forces nabbed one person at Arespura in Anantnag constituency when he was trying to take a hand grenade into the polling station. Two blasts occurred in Sopor town today but there was no loss of life.

India: Kashmir Elections Marred by Boycott, Charges of Coercion

BK2305101196 Hong Kong AFP in English 0948 GMT 23 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Srinagar, India, May 23 (AFP) — Voters went to the polls in the troubled Kashmir Valley on Thursday [23 May], but the parliamentary elections were marred by a boycott and charges that Indian troops had forced people to participate.

In a number of towns in the valley gripped by a Muslim insurgency, the security forces used batons and tear gas to break up anti-Indian protests and fired over the heads of demonstrators, police said.

An Indian government spokesman accused Pakistani troops meanwhile of opening fire on Indian border posts along the tense frontier dividing the disputed Himalayan territory in a bid to disrupt the elections.

Indian and foreign journalists were also roughed up by paramilitary troops who broke up a spontaneous anti-election protest by hundreds of Kashmiri Moslems in the town of Baramulla, witnesses said. AFP photographer Tauseef Mustafa was beaten with gunbutts and had his film confiscated after taking pictures of Kashmiri women injured by the troops.

Moslem separatist groups had called for a boycott of the elections in the Kashmir Valley constituencies of Anantnag and Baramulla, which have a total of 1.4 million eligible voters. Residents of Anantnag, the main town in the constituency of the same name, appeared to be largely heeding the appeal to shun the polls and turnout was negligible by mid-day.

Election officials at four polling stations in Anantnag with a total of 3,000 voters on their rolls said only 80 people had turned up to cast their ballots more than four hours after voting began at 7:00 a.m. (0130 GMT).

At polling booth No. 45 in Anantnag's Islamia Hanifia College, not a single one of the 581 registered voters had cast a ballot, said an Indian election official wearing a bulletproof vest who declined to give his name.

In the town of Bijbehara, where 52 demonstrators were shot dead by Indian troops in October 1993, residents said they were boycotting the polls despite appeals to vote being made over the loudhailers of mosques.

Polling stations were deserted in Anantnag and Bijbehara, but the scene was altogether different in nearby villages as hundreds of people crowded polling stations set up in schools and guarded by troops in battle-gear.

Without exception, however, they said they had been forced by the Indian army to come out and vote in an election which the Indian authorities have said will usher in a return of "normalcy" in strife-torn Kashmir.

"We have been dragged out of our homes by the army," said Fayaz Ahmad, a student from the village of Lethpora. "We are not here of our own desire. Everybody has come here by force."

Ahmad and dozens of other men squatting in rows in a muddy field outside the polling station said soldiers had

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entered their villages shortly after dawn and told them to go and vote.

"They told us 'If you don't go vote you will be beaten,'" said a man who gave only his first name, Farooq, out of fear of reprisals. "They said 'If you don't have ink on your finger you will be dealt with."

The index finger of a voter in India is daubed with ink after casting the ballot in order to prevent repeat voting.

"We've been told they'll check the marks on our fingers," said Rafika, 30, from the village of Awantipora. "We're voting under duress."

She said soldiers came to her village just after dawn and forced her and other women to walk several miles (kilometers) in the rain to vote, leaving their children at home.

An election official at a polling booth in Awantipora, where people said they had been forced by the army to vote, said more than 500 of the 821 voters on his list had cast their ballots in the first four hours.

A number of voters whispered to reporters that they planned to invalidate their ballots as a protest by voting for all of the candidates on the list. "We don't know who most of them are anyway," said one man.

An Indian paramilitary officer who requested anonymity acknowledged that troops had gone around since early morning urging people to vote.

"They're being encouraged to come out and vote, but they're not being pushed," said the commander in the Central Reserve Police Force, which provided security at polling stations to prevent attacks by militants.

"People are being told that they can come out and vote without fear of militants," he said. "That is true."

Srinagar, the Kashmir summer capital, and other towns in the valley were paralyzed for a fourth straight day meanwhile by a strike called by Moslem separatist groups opposed to the elections.

Thursday's polls in Anantnag and Baramulla are the penultimate round of elections for a 545-member parliament which concluded in the rest of India on May 7.

Srinagar and Udhampur district are scheduled to vote on May 30, exactly two weeks after India's first Hindu nationalist government took office in New Delhi.

India: Voting in Kashmir 'Peaceful'; Turnout Detailed

BK2305092196 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0830 GMT 23 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In the Kashmir Valley, reports received from different polling stations in Anantnag and Baramula parliamentary constituencies indicate over 45 percent of voters had exercised their franchise in the first few hours. We take you to Srinagar for the latest report:

[Begin recording] In Kashmir Valley, polling for the two parliamentary constituencies of Anantnag and Baramula started this morning at a low pace due to bad weather, but it picked up later in the afternoon. More than 45 percent voters had cast their votes in both the constituencies. According to the reports received from the polling stations, voters are waiting for their turn to come. I visited some of the polling booths in Baramula constituency — such as Kupwara city, Takkar, Trehgam, Obra — where over 30 percent voters had already cast their votes till 1100. In Tangdhar, 60 percent voters had cast their votes. When I spoke to some of the senior citizen voters, they expressed their happiness and wished that the popular government may be installed at the earliest so that their miseries are over which they have been facing during the last seven years. In Anantnag parliamentary constituency, voters in large number are casting their votes. At many places in this constituency, they are welcoming this new era of democratic process by reciting shehnai [clarinets — as heard]. So far, polling has been peaceful and no untoward incident has been reported from any part of the valley.

This is Gurjeet Malik reporting from Srinagar. [end recording]

According to reports, by 1100 about 20 percent votes were polled in Anantnag, 18 percent in Kulgam, 10 percent in Devisa, 12 percent in Doru, 10 percent in Jhangash, 7 percent in Pahlgam, 10 percent in Nurabad, 12 percent in Kokarnag, 12 percent in Pulwama, and 12 percent in Wachi in Anantnag parliamentary constituency.

India: Islamabad—Total Strike Against 'Hoax' Kashmir Polls

BK2305050296 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 0300 GMT 23 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In occupied Kashmir, protest demonstrations and total strike against the so-called elections scheduled for today is to continue throughout the valley with people remaining confined to their

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homes. The strike has been called by the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, which crippled the occupied territory yesterday as well. All bazaars, business centers, banks, courts, government and private offices, and schools and colleges remained closed in occupied Kashmir yesterday, and transport was off the roads. Cities and towns throughout occupied Kashmir presented a deserted look and the military threats by Indians to stop people from observing the strike remained unheeded. It was reported that a number of polling booths set up for Baramula, Islamabad constituencies were attacked by the freedom fighters killing and wounding a number of Indian occupation troops. Fresh military reinforcements have been rushed by Indian Government to these towns.

And in Azad Kashmir, Black Day is being observed today against the election farce in occupied territory. Protest demonstrations are being held throughout Azad Kashmir to condemn Indian authorities for staging fraudulent elections. Protesters in Muzaffarabad would proceed to the UN Observers Mission office to deliver a memorandum for registering their protest with the world body against the election farce. All business establishments and transports will remain at standstill from 0900 to 1200 noon.

A big protest demonstration was held in Islamabad yesterday to express solidarity with the Kashmiri people. The protesters also condemned the statement of the new Indian prime minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, who laid claim on Azad Jammu and Kashmir. A five-member delegation of the protesters went to the office of the Indian High Commission and delivered a memorandum conveying their deep resentment over the fraudulent elections and brutalities being committed in occupied territory. A similar demonstration has been organized by the Milli Yakjehti Council [National Solidarity Council] and Pakistan Democratic Party along with other political leaders and Kashmiri organizations in Lahore today to demonstrate their sympathies and support for the Kashmiri freedom fighters. Demonstrations are also being held in Karachi, Peshawar, Quetta, and other big and small cities and towns.

A top All Parties Hurriyat Conference leader, Mr. Mohammad Yasin Malik, has threatened to go on a fast unto death if Indian authorities do not correct human rights records in occupied Jammu and Kashmir within the next 15 days. Talking to newsmen in Srinagar, he strongly demanded that New Delhi allow Amnesty International to visit occupied Kashmir and stop intimidation and coercion of Kashmiri people by the Indian forces.

The All Parties Hurriyat Conference has said the hoax of elections being enacted by the Indian authorities in occupied Kashmir would only further aggravate the situation and would not deter the Kashmiris from carrying on their struggle for the right of self-determination. Addressing a news conference at the United Nations, a Hurriyat leader, Mr. Mumtaz Ahmad Wani, described these elections as a big fraud through which New Delhi was trying to boost its image.

Earlier, a three-member Hurriyat delegation led by Mr. Wani met with the United Nations assistant secretary general, Mr. (Alberto De Soto), and urged the world body to take effective steps to stop the gross human rights violations in occupied Kashmir. The delegation also had a series of meetings with senior U.S. State Department officials and members of Congress in Washington and urged them to help convene intra Kashmir talks to solve the dispute.

India: Poll Preparation Progresses as Militants Killed, Captured

BK2205164196 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1530 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In Jammu and Kashmir, Anantnag and Baramula parliamentary constituencies go to the polls tomorrow. A high-level meeting presided over by the chief secretary, Mr. Ashok Kumar, reviewed the poll arrangements in Srinagar today. The meeting was informed that a large number of state government employees have started cooperating in completing the poll process. Over 10,000 election personnel from out of the state are already positioned at the polling stations set up in the two constituencies.

The state governor, General K.V. Krishna Rao, and the chief electoral officer, Mr. Jalil Ahmad Khan, have urged the people to come out in large numbers to vote without any fear to frustrate Pakistan's designs in Kashmir. Addressing a press conference in Srinagar today, the Corps Commander General Officer in Commanding Lieutenant General G.S. Dhillon said that the role of the Army in the state is to create a congenial atmosphere for holding free and peaceful polls.

Special arrangements have been made in Delhi, Jammu, and some other parts of the state for migrant voters of Kashmir valley. The election authorities have clarified that migrant voters can send their postal ballots even after tomorrow. However, these ballot papers should reach the returning officers of the concerned constituencies before the commencement of the counting in the 1st of next month.

Meanwhile, 10 militants, seven of them foreign mercenaries, were killed in three different encounters in the last 24 hours. Ten other militants were arrested, and security forces recovered a large quantity of arms and ammunition during encounters and search operations.

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India: Situation in Violence-Hit Assam Areas Updated

BK2205053196 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0245 GMT 20 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In Assam, the situation in the violence-hit Kokrajhar District is reported to be under control. According to official sources in Guwahati, no fresh incident has been reported from any part of the district since last night. Thirty-four bodies have so far been recovered from different parts of the district. The Assam paramilitary forces are patrolling around the clock in the affected areas. The curfew was relaxed during the day yesterday in Gossaigaon area. An all-party delegation yesterday visited the relief camps in Kokrajhar where the affected people have taken shelter. The delegation members assured the inmates of the camps of all protection.

As already reported, two senior officials from the Defense and Home Ministries are being sent to the violence-affected areas to review the situation. The Assam government has set up a commission of inquiry to probe the violence in Kokrajhar District. The chief minister, Mr. Prafulla Kumar Mohanta, has appealed to the people to live in peace and amity.

Meanwhile, the state police have arrested seven persons in connection with the killing of Mr. Paragkumar Das, editor of a language daily in Guwahati on Friday. Police have also announced a reward of 1 lakh rupees to anyone providing information about the killers of the Tinsukhia District Superintendent of Police and the former minister, Mr. Nagen Neog. Meanwhile, the National Union of Journalists of India has demanded a CBI [Central Bureau of Investigation] inquiry into the killing.

India: Fresh Tension in Assam; Death Toll Rises to 65

BK2205092896 Delhi Doordarshan Television Network in English 1530 GMT 21 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In Assam, fresh tension started mounting today in the (Marapani) area of Golaghat District as suspected Naga miscreants set some houses of (Folagan) village afire. According to Golaghat district authorities, suspected Naga miscreants set ablaze 12 houses last night and a few this morning under the cover of heavy gunshots. Security forces in the area returned the fire and chased away the miscreants. Reinforcements of paramilitary forces have been rushed to the area, and the Army has been put on alert to assist the administration.

A central team of senior officials of the home and defense ministries and the CRPF [Central Reserve Police Force] reviewed the law and order situation with the state government officials at Dispur today. The death toll in the ethnic violence in Kokrajhar District and Sidli areas of Bongaigaon District rose to 65 with the recovery of more bodies. Official reports say most of the bodies were in a decomposed state. The situation was however stated to be under control and no fresh incident of violence was reported.

Normal life was disrupted in most parts of the state today following a 12-hour statewide bundh [strike] called by the banned ULFA [United Liberation Front of Assam]. The bundh was called in protest against the killing of Parag Das, executive editor of ASSAMIA PRATIDIN, and demanding arrest of the culprits. It was almost total and peaceful in the Brahmaputra valley and partial in the two hill districts of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar. It evoked no response in the Barak Valley of South Assam. The bundh was total in Guwahati.

India: Assam Urges Central Government To Seal Bangladesh Border

BK2205094196 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0830 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The overall situation in Kokrajhar and neighboring Bongaigaon districts of Lower Assam is now reported to be tense but under control. The army is assisting the civil administration in containing clashes and in providing relief. Over 2 lakh homeless are taking shelter in relief camps.

The Assam government has urged the center to seal the Indo- Bangladesh border to prevent influx from across the border and check transborder smuggling and crimes. The state government's request was conveyed to the three-member central team which visited Guwahati yesterday.

India: 'Economic Impact' of Elections Viewed

BK2105164096 Bombay THE TIMES OF INDIA in English 21 May 96 p 10

[Article by N.J. Jhaveri: "Economic Impact of 1996 Election"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The installation of a BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] government has been well received by industry stock markets and foreign institutional investors (FIIs). But it is too soon for jubilation. Whether Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee will be able to prove majority support and whether the government which emerges in June would be a coalition of convenience, or a government of parties with a shared vision, are still open questions. If the outcome is not favourable, bulls

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would turn bears overnight and fund managers exit as fast as they came in.

There are four key areas of concern from business and industry's point of view: foreign investment and import policy, reforms of financial markets, privatisation and fiscal discipline. Even when the Rao government advocated foreign competition in the consumer goods sector, the idea was not to spread red carpets for Cokes and Pepsis and close down Parles but to stress the need for exposing the entire economy to competition. While they were honest, denouncement of foreign investment in consumer goods industries by other parties was only for public consumption. In reality, state governments are still vying with one another to host consumer goods MNCs [multinational corporations]. And why not? It is they who can create jobs for the locals.

Allowing more consumer goods industries will not stop all FDI [foreign direct investment] flows, but sending out wrong messages, like review of Enron, will affect their confidence. Slowdown in FDI, which is a trickle as it is, and postponing further reduction in import tariff, would affect integration of India with the global economy. Losers of such an 'inward looking' policy will be Indian consumers and exporters.

Central Feature

A central feature of Indian planning is the use of restrictive tools for protection of domestic economic entities without simultaneously using this opportunity for all round development. Relatively small countries such as South Korea, Taiwan and Israel imported potato chips and permitted Cokes and KFCs [Kentucky Fried Chicken] to set up shops even as they created an environment for the development of indigenous technology for application in conventional and sophisticated industries. Many of these industries have now emerged as suppliers of critical components for global players. They have recovered profits repatriated by Cokes and Pepsis many times over. Preoccupied with politicking, Indian politicians never asked certain questions. For instance, why has India, with all the brain power at its command, not set up a computer chips industry of its own, as has been done by Taiwan? Or with so many scientists around, why has India not developed technology to improve agricultural productivity, as has been done by Israel? Or why has India not seen the reverse brain drain and return of capital which China has witnessed?

The main reason for slow privatisation is that public sector enterprises at the state level have been used for granting patronage. Even former finance minister, Manmohan Singh virtually expressed his helplessness in overcoming political resistance. Under a weak coalition government, the public sector will become more of a holy cow than what it already is.

Drain on Exchequer

Unreformed PSUs [public sector units] are a drain on the exchequer; they also deprive other productive sectors of resources. Industry should not entertain hopes of any significant improvement in flow of funds to it. The answer is that resources would be increased through higher savings and reduction in expenditure. But no government has seriously addressed the issue of improving return on public sector investment. If the public sector were to earn two thirds of the return on investment earned by private sector corporates, additional resources would be available to wipe out the revenue deficit and fund programmes like education and public health.

Domestic financial institutions are strapped for liquidity. The banking system is not only short of funds but the fear is that it may be abused for populism. For increasing resource flows through capital markets industry was looking for some breakthroughs in financial reforms such as privatisation of insurance sector which, apart from being a reform in its own right, would have released pension and provident funds for private sector infrastructure projects. If stronger governments have shied away from such difficult measures, can a weak coalition pursue them?

With the key role of regional parties in elections 1996, the debate on autonomy of state governments has got a sharper edge. But as of now it merely translates into the central government picking up the tab for fiscal indiscipline of state governments. An 'activist' RBI [Reserve Bank of India], took years to tackle state overdrafts. All the good work done by RBI will come to a nought if the price of political stability is condoning heavy budgetary burden due to populism. On its pan, no central government would sacrifice itself for the cause of fiscal discipline by making overdue adjustment in administered prices and curtailing subsidies.

If political stability gained by accommodating diverse views results in maintenance of liberalisation then the economy will be like a still picture. If things are to be different the BJP will have to be more clear about its external liberalisation policies and the NF-LF [National Front-Left Front] will have to overcome their distrust of the private sector. All of them will have to learn to keep sanctity of certain promises.

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India: Opening of Ancient Links With Central Asian States Viewed

BK2205073396 Madras THE HINDU in English 21 May 96 p 10

[Editorial: "An Iranian Triumph"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In the race for the hydrocarbon riches of Central Asia, Iran appears to have inched ahead of competitors in the region, including the traditional rival Turkey and its strategically, the United States. One symbol of that impressive success is the 165 km railway link between the northeastern Iranian town of Masad and Sarakhs across the border in Turkmenistan. A geopolitical event of great significance for the region with commercial and strategic implications, said the Iranian president, Mr. Hashemi Rafsanjani, at the inaugural attended by representatives from all the neighbouring countries, including India and China. In coordination with the existing railroads in Central Asia, the linkup gives the five landlocked countries of Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan vital access to the Persian Gulf and provides the missing link to complete the great silk route, the medieval trade connection between the East and the West. Via the Iranian rail network, the system leads south to the Gulf and west to Europe. Ports are also said to be under construction along the Caspian coast and new shipping routes established.

Beyond the symbolism, the completion of the link-up means that Iran has put back American efforts to isolate it physically by inducing some of the former Soviet republics into toeing its anti-Tehran policy line. Whatever label Washington chooses to give Iran, the Tehran regime has been showing commendable pragmatism while making friends around and in the bargain denying a foothold for the West which can in its eye turn into a security threat. Iran has operated cautiously also for fear of fanning secessionist tendencies within its own borders. It must feel quite satisfied with the emerging political realignments in neighbouring Afghanistan, where Taleban, the rabidly fundamentalist Pakistan-U.S. brainchild, has apparently lost out. From all accounts Tehran has been taking an active role in catalysing the change.

For India, whose ties with Central Asia date back centuries, the developments must bring some hope in terms of denial of support to fundamentalist terrorism and much cheer in the form of business and trade and commerce. India has in the years since the collapse of the Soviet Union been exploring avenues for a resumption of the old ties with the region, the effort getting rewarded even if slowly and unspectacularly. What impact can the opening up of this strategic region have on the other Asian giant? At the eastern end of the silk route is Xinjiang in northwestern China which has recently been witnessing disturbances. China has waged a relentless campaign to counter Muslim and ethnic nationalism, using the army to crush uprisings and pressuring surrounding provinces to crack down on Xinjiang separatists operating from their territory. The Beijing government has issued an alert against unidentified foreigners using religion to stir up anti-Chinese sentiment in the region that borders three mainly Muslim Central Asian States as well as Afghanistan and Pakistan. Last month, China signed a treaty with Russia, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to guard against military clashes along its border. It was believed that the strategic accord would help Beijing combat any surge in Muslim sentiment and separatism in Xinjiang. Hardly a week ago, local communist party officials appealed to the people not to fall a prey to what they called extremists using the cloak of religion to incite holy wars. A time of prolonged transition in Beijing coincides with an upsurge in such activities. To China's remote, backward western region, the opening up of ancient links can bring both benefits by way of increased trade and dangers through support from outside for "splittist" activities.

Iran

Iran: IRGC To Hold War Games in Khorramshahr

LD2105212196 Tehran IRNA in English 2031 GMT 21 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Ahwaz, May 21, (IRNA) — "Moghaddam" command post and "Wali-e-Asr" Seventh Army Division announced that sea and ground maneuvers organized by the Islamic Revolution Guard's Corps [IRGC] will be carried out at Khorramshahr public region.

Brigadier General Yazdan Moayyedi Niya said on Tuesday [21 May] that the war game aims to boost the combat capability of the Islamic Revolution Guard's Corps armoured units.

He made the announcement on the eve of May 22 marking the liberation of Khorramshahr (1982) and added that during the exercise training ammunition will be used.

General Moayyedi Niya noted that necessary steps have been taken for establishing safety measures in the war game zone and that the people of Khorramshahr can visit the scenes of maneuver.

According to the general, four thousand Basij (volunteer mobilization) forces participating in the game will enter the resistant and heroic city as flag-bearers of

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Khorramshahr's liberation, congregating in front of the city's Jama mosque.

The general further said that the construction of a memorial building in order to keep the memory of the martyrs of Karbala-5 operation in Shalamcheh alive, shall be initiated in May 23.

Iran: Ground Forces Commander Cited on 'Velayat' Maneuvers

NC2305063896 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 0330 GMT 23 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] In tandem with the anniversary of the epic of the conquest of Khorramshahr, the big "Velayat" maneuvers will begin this afternoon. More than 200,000 personnel of the ground forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran's armed forces in Kushk-e Nosrat,in Qom, will participate. The maneuvers will kick off with a parade ceremony.

Reporting this, the ground forces commander of the Islamic Republic of Iran's armed forces said: The forces participating in the maneuvers will carry out tactical operations in seven phases for two days, and will occupy the imaginary enemy's positions. He said: Today at dusk, parachutists of the special squad will land behind enemy positions to destroy provision and ammunition depots and command positions and to prepare the area for the landing of paratroopers. He added: After paratroopers land on Thursday night, two infantry armies will carry out a night attack to infiltrate the enemy's positions and will then cross the imaginary enemy line to prepare for a day attack on Friday morning.

Brigadier General Dadbin added: Tomorrow morning the day attack — supported by fire from the airborne unit, artillery, missile launchers, and all the heavy weapons — will be carried out. The ground forces commander said this big maneuver is ready to be implemented in a very well-coordinated manner, and that the units participating in the exercises have been deployed in a very disciplined manner in the area.

Iran: Tehran on Significance of 'Velayat' Military Exercises

NC2305083196 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 0345 GMT 23 May 96

[Commentary by the News Research and Commentary Group]

[FBIS Translated Text] Today, on the anniversary of the epic of the liberation of Khorramshahr, the big "Velayat" maneuvers will be held in a 5,400-sq km area with the participation of 200,000 personnel and soldiers of the ground and air forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The objective of these exercises — in which a large number of vehicles, military installations, and different kinds of weapons will be used — is to display the armed forces' combat potential and to put the newest military theories to the test.

In view of the large number of personnel participating in the maneuvers, as well as the big area the maneuvers will cover, experts have described them as unprecedented, the biggest maneuvers in the Middle East.

Big air, naval, and ground maneuvers are natural for forces that have experienced eight years of Sacred Defense [reference to the Iran-Iraq war]. Actually the gathering of this huge volume of armed forces personnel — which shows only a small part of the potential of the nation's military forces — shows that those responsible for big, unforgettable epics such as the conquest of Khorramshahr, and those who participated in the spectacular Fath al-Mobin operations and Iran's other military victories, continue to maintain their strength and readiness, and are ready to, under any conditions and circumstances, display their strength and repeat the glorious scenes of the Sacred Defense.

The special characteristic of all of Iran's military maneuvers, and especially today's maneuvers, is that our homeland's brave fighters will use techniques and methods that they themselves have learned on the battlefield. They have have actually acquired priceless experiences through their brave military operations. This was at a time when the Armed Forces, the [Islamic Revolution Guards] Corps, and the Mobilization Corps relied only on divine strength and popular support, throughout the imposed war.

The readiness of our country's military forces speaks of the independent political nature and sovereignty of our country, and shows the nation's determination to fulfill national and religious aspirations. And this is a great honor that will never be cast into oblivion but will continue to guarantee the glory of our Islamic homeland and make the enemy think twice about attacking our territory. At the same time, Islamic Iran has always used its military strength only to defend itself and to thwart aggression, and these forces have no other objective than to create stability and security in the region and dry up the roots of aggression.

The behavior of the Iranian forces during the eight years of Sacred Defense and Iran's political and military positions in the ensuing Persian Gulf crises are very clear proof of this, and something all impartial international observers also acknowledge. Thus, the strength

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and power of Iran's combat forces should be viewed as an element for regional peace and stability that is displayed to the world by constantly holding huge maneuvers.

Iran: Majles Passes Bill To Probe State Institutions' Activities

LD1905171596 Tehran IRNA in English 1701 GMT 19 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, May 19, IRNA — Majles on Sunday approved to put on the agenda the inquiry into the activities of the state institutions.

Majles Speaker Hojjat ol-Eslam 'Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri said the bill which allows Majles to probe into the activities of state institutions was put to voting since the Majles code had not earlier clearly stipulated the procedure of presenting the investigation report out of the agenda.

The speaker said in the meantime the inquiry into the foundation of Mostazafan and Janbazan, Municipality of Tehran and the banks, already on the agenda of the Majles, is not the matter of change in management.

He said the result of the inquiry into the institutions formerly put on the agenda of Majles would be announced before the term of the fourth Majles comes to an end.

The term of the fourth Majles is expected to expire on May 26.

Iran: Speaker Asks Deputies To Preserve Dignity of Majles

LD1905174496 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 1630 GMT 19 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] At the start of today's open Majles session, Mr 'Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri stressed the importance of defending and safeguarding the dignity and honor of the Majles. Addressing the deputies, Mr. Nateq-Nuri said: Let the open tribune of the Majles remain sacred until the end of this term and for ever; let its sanctity be preserved. The head of the legislature spoke of the importance of the existence of the Guardian Council and added: The legitimacy of all the bills approved by the Majles and all the laws in the country, during all the terms, depends on the Guardian Council and all the jurisconsults on the council have been selected by the eminent leader.

Iran: Majles Session Discusses Bill on Islamic Council Elections

LD2105164696 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 0938 GMT 21 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] At today's open majles session, the bill on the organization and duties of, and elections for, Islamic councils and the election of mayors, which was returned to the Majlis by the Guardian Council because some of its articles contravened the constitution, was discussed. Several of the amendments proposed [by the Guardian Council] were approved. Regarding several other articles of this bill, the deputies again approved the previously approved articles. The bill will, therefore, be sent to the Expediency Council.

At today's session, the Committee for Articles 88 and 90 of the Constitution presented its report to the majles about the outcome of the investigation into questions put by two deputies to the ministers of mines and metals and health and medical treatment regarding the reason for the closing of the Bijar Iron Ore Mine and the reason why the bill for the allocation of doctors and medical services was not fairly implemented.

In addition to this, the rapporteur of the Committee for Economic, Financial, and Cooperatives Affairs continued the presentation of the report on the investigation and enquiry into the performance of the Saderat [export] Bank.

Also at today's session, the report prepared by the Committee for Councils and Internal Affairs regarding the investigation and enquiry into the performance of Tehran Municipality was read out. In view of the fact that time had run out, the rest of the report will be read at tomorrow's session.

Iran: Majles Deputy Warns Against Threat From Liberalism

LD2105213896 Tehran RESALAT in Persian 16 May 96 p 6

[Article: "Majles Tehran Deputy Seyyed Morteza Nabavi Says Threat From Liberalism Has Not Ended"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The first pre-agenda speaker at yesterday's [15 May] open session of the Islamic majles was a deputy from Tehran, Engineer Seyyed Morteza Nabavi, who said: As a majles deputy I feel duty-bound to discuss an issue with my dear colleagues. [passage omitted]

We, the majlis deputies, cannot remain indifferent in the face of the cultural onslaught being launched by liberalism. How can we ignore the promotion of decadence and unrestrained behaviour among our young

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generation? Without a demonstration of zeal by the Islamic majles, soon we would witness the gradual infiltration of this decadent culture into our schools, universities, and other educational establishments; and we would see unchaste scenes similar to the pre-revolution era in our parks and public thoroughfares. If that were to happen, the Hezbollah would weaken day by day and the satanic parties would gain strength.

How can a deputy remain silent vis-a-vis the political propaganda launched by liberalism to separate religion from politics? Under the guise of freedom of speech, the liberals are undermining the principle of Velayat-e Faqih and are ridiculing our religious values. And when someone objects to their behaviour, they attack him with such labels as "bigotry" and "fascism".

The liberals enjoy the support of arrogant mouthpieces [Western media] and the majles should not retreat in the face of their attempts to start talks with the United States. They say that for the sake of the country's progress we should overlook the indecency of rapprochement with the United States. History proves that if the liberals gain strength, they will submit our dear Iran to the aliens and would have no mercy upon the religious people.

Today, liberalism poses the greatest threat to our economy. Some factory managers, officials, and technocrats are resorting to various tricks in order to take control of our key industries. The liberals' ultimate objective is to implement their political and cultural plans by controlling the economy. Financial power would enable them to support their desired candidates in the majles and other elections. They would appoint cabinet ministers and would gradually take charge of state affairs. This issue requires more time and I shall discuss it on another occasion. [passage omitted]

Iran: Paper Says Political Pluralism Part of Islamic Revolution

LD1905194896 Tehran 'ASR-E MA in Persian 15 May 96 p 1

[Unattributed commentary: "Political Pluralism"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] At a meeting with journalists, the great leader of the revolution ['Ali Khamene'i] emphasized the need for various tendencies within the press community and said that political tendencies on the part of a Muslim loyal to the revolution and to the system, as well as different ideas and viewpoints within the framework of respecting the principle of revolution and of the system were a natural and acceptable process.

These comments have emphasized the fact that our revolution and our system are pluralistic by nature, especially at the present stage and from a political viewpoint, and have the appropriate capacity to tolerate various viewpoints and different ideological tendencies.

The existence of various political factions, within the limits of guaranteeing the principle of revolution and of the system, has always been approved by the leaders and officials during the post- revolutionary years. [passage omitted]

The interesting fact is that despite this clear background and the practical thinking of the system's leaders and officials, and after 18 years of practicing this method, some people describe any tastes or politico-ideological thinking that are contrary to their own as being anti-system and anti-revolution. They want to portray the system as being monopolized by a specific tendency.

Of course during the past 18 years, such a monopolized attitude and way of thinking has always existed among certain sections of the forces who believe in revolution and the system and at present, for some reason, this has been stirred up more than in the past.

Anyway, the existence of a variety of political and ideological tendencies will lead to growth and progress only in a society in which each faction's stance is presented clearly and transparently, a society in which their proponents resort freely to healthy competition and contrasting views and ideas in the form of official formations and parties and within the framework of guaranteeing the principle of the system and the revolution, and of respecting the law. [passage omitted]

We hope that the comments by the great leader of the revolution will become a turning point in changing the destructive campaign policy of those who consider that only they believe in Islam and revolution and the system, and that other Muslim forces are beyond religion and alien to the revolution and to the system.

Iran: Newspaper Restates Values of Islamic Revolution

LD2005142996 Tehran TEHRAN TIMES in English 16 May 96 p 2

[Unattributed commentary: "Revolution: A Matter of Values"]

[FBIS Translated Text] With the Islamic Revolution, this country has embarked upon a new set of values. One of these values is not to be under the domination of the East or West. That is, Iran is an independent nation; it will decide what is good for it, what is in its interest. It won't allow a foreign power to use Iran for its own gain.

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This is important because our history has proven otherwise. Therefore, one theme of the Islamic Revolution is anti-colonialism. This also means the present society is against an upper-class Iranian clique banding up with a foreign power in order to plunder the nation's wealth for individual gain.

No society can ignore economics. The Islamic Republic of Iran is aware that it must develop economically. We have had an eight-year war with Iraq, a war begun for no particular reason, but ending in the defeat of the aggressor. Not only did the world not care that Iran was undergoing a senseless, imposed war, but this war was fuelled by Western interests — selling arms to get rich.

Iran is quite aware that no foreign nation will work in the interest of Iran. The nation must look after itself. The first advantage of peace is that people are not killed; and the second advantage is that money can be spent to develop the society.

It has been the experience of many nations that effort, initiative, creativity, and industriousness result in a disparity in classes, a disparity which results in poverty and resentment. Another value of the Islamic Republic is that development without justice is not worth attaining. Therefore, development is two- sided: it must go hand in hand with justice.

This means that if justice is being compromised, development must be reined in until the society is back on track. Development and justice need not be contradictory.

Another value is education. Fifty percent of Iran's 65 million population is under 16 years of age. If Iran is to have a future, the youth cannot be ignored. The whole foundation of a country lies in its youth. The youth must learn about their history, their country's relationship with the outside world, and they — the youth who can no longer remember the former Shah — must learn why there was a revolution.

Hence, the values of the Islamic Republic are: to refuse domination by foreign powers; to develop economically; not to ignore social justice; not to begin a war; and to educate its youth.

Iran: General Safavi—Iran Sole Power for Peace in Persian Gulf

LD2105175496 Tehran IRNA in English
1735 GMT 21 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, May 21, IRNA — Deputy Commander of Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), and commander of Thar-Allah, Brigadier General Rahim Safavi said here Monday [20 May] that the Iranian army was the only force capable of maintaining peace in the Persian Gulf.

General Safavi who was speaking on the occasion of the anniversary of liberation of Iran's Persian Gulf port city of Khorramshahr from Iraqi occupation said that the recapture of the port city had been due to the genius of Iranian fighters and also due to Imam Khomeyni for his deep religious faith.

The IRGC deputy commander said Iraqis never expected such heroic fighting by Iran's Muslim combatants and added that the recapture of the city by the Iranian forces had astounded both the Iraqis and international analysts.

Iran: Khonsari on Sudan, Ties With Egypt, Peace

NC2205151196 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1415 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Beirut, 22 May (MENA) — A senior Iranian official has denied the presence of Iranian bases or military training centers inside Sudanese territory that would threaten Egypt's national security. He categorically denied such reports and said Iran's relationship with Sudan will not be at the expense of Egypt or directed against any country in the region.

Mohammad Kazem Khonsari, under secretary of the Iranian Foreign Ministry for the Middle East and North African affairs, added that he hopes this position will be clear to our Egyptian brothers.

In an interview with MENA's correspondent in Beirut, Khonsari, who is currently visiting Beirut, commented on reports about contacts between Tehran and certain Islamic fundamentalist groups in Egypt. He emphasized that his country rejects the establishment of such ties or contacts with any Islamic group that exercises violence and carries out assassinations against people in Egypt.

Khonsari, who has been in Beirut for two weeks now, underlined his country's concern to reject the method of assassinations — which goes against Islam — and intervention in any country's internal affairs. He expressed his country's willingness, at present, to develop political and economic ties with Egypt for the good of the Egyptian and Iranian peoples and all the region's countries. He also expressed his optimism that the next stage will witness good relations with Egypt, as an important country in the region. Khonsari said Egyptian-Iranian relations now are considered better than before and are heading more positively toward joint cooperation in various spheres.

He added that there are continuous and open channels of contact between Cairo and Tehran for consultation

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and coordination on a number of issues concerning the two countries. He noted that the two countries share several joint positions on certain fundamental issues and that cooperation and coordination exist during meetings of world and regional organizations within the United Nations, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and the nonaligned countries.

Khonsari said coordination is continuing between Tehran and Damascus and that the next stage will see further cooperation and coordination between the two countries.

Khonsari answered a question on whether there is contradiction between the Syrian and Iranian positions on the peace process and the continuation of Syria's negotiations with Israel. He explained that there is no contradiction with Syria, saying: We have full confidence in Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad.

Khonsari was asked if Iran opposes any peace accord between Syria, Lebanon, and Israel. He replied: The Arab countries have agreed on a just and comprehensive peace in the region. However, we are confident that Israel is not ready to give the Palestinians back all their rights — especially the right to the return of all Palestinians who are outside their occupied territories or the Jerusalem issue, which concerns all Muslims. He added that all evidence and Israeli officials' statements so far indicate that they are ready for this peace.

Khonsari commented on the April understanding a Lebanese-Israeli cease-fire accord. He said a cease-fire accord between Lebanon and Israel depends on the Israelis' intentions to implement it. He added: We are convinced that Israel's hostile nature and the massacres it commits cast doubt on Israel's commitment.

The Iranian official was asked if Iran will continue backing Hizballah and the Lebanese Islamic resistance if a comprehensive peace accord is reached between Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. He said that if a comprehensive and just peace is reached, Israel's full withdrawal from southern Lebanon, Western al-Biqa', and the Golan is effected, and occupation ends, there will be no need for armed resistance, because the armed resistance is linked to this occupation.

He warned Israel against any attempt to target Iran. The Israelis, he said, know that Iran is not an easy target and that it has means of resistance and defense that enable it to handle such threats.

He described Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres' threats to Iran, as the world's most dangerous state. As an attempt to reverse facts and tarnish Iran's image before world public opinion. He denied that Iran has any connection with terrorist operations in the region.

The Iranian official said the state terrorism Israel practices, the continuous kidnapping and assassination of Palestinians and Lebanese nationals, and the massacres of peaceable civilians, the last of which came in Qana and al-Nabatiyah in south Lebanon, confirm that Israel is the number one terrorist state.

Khonsari denied that the Iranian leadership is contemplating the ownership of nuclear weapons or an atomic bomb. But he did say that Iran is entitled to benefit from nuclear energy in the fields of development and peace. He added: Israel's claims in this connection are only an attempt to cover up its ownership of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, which, in our view, pose a threat to Iranian and Egyptian security as well as the security of the entire region. He reiterated that Iran backs the Egyptian proposal to free the Middle East of weapons of mass destruction.

Touching on Iranian-Russian cooperation to set up a nuclear plant in Bushehr, Khonsari said the agreement with Russia is being implemented and the plant will be completed in spite of U.S. pressure on Moscow.

The Iranian official said there are no direct or indirect channels of communication between Tehran and Washington. Right now we are not prepared to establish contact with the United States, he said, denying any international mediation in that regard.

The Iranian undersecretary said he expects the United States to escalate the tone of its threats and warnings in the presidential election year to win the votes of the Jewish lobby. We are accustomed to such things and we no longer pay attention to these threats, particularly after the U.S. embargo imposed on Iran at the beginning of the Islamic Revolution 17 years ago has failed, he said, adding that the continuing U.S. freeze on Iranian assets—over $3 billion—proves its lack of credibility.

The Iranian official criticized the security cooperation agreement signed between Turkey and Israel, pointing out that it does not serve collective regional security. He noted that the Iranian Foreign Ministry conveyed to Turkish officials its concern at the agreement, stating that it is not in the interest of regional states or their security.

Khonsari called for lifting the embargo imposed on the Iraqi people, expressing his country's concern at the economic, food, and health problems Iraq is facing.

He refused to comment on the oil-for-food agreement Iraq signed with the United Nations, describing his country's relations with Baghdad as normal and fraternal.

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Touching on Iran's relations with the Gulf states and the three islands of the United Arab Emirates [UAE], Khonsari said: We are eager for better relations with the Gulf states. He remarked that the island's problem is a misunderstanding. He added that Iran is prepared to resume talks with the UAE to discuss this in a fraternal context, away from foreign interference. He added that the problem can be solved and that his country expects the UAE foreign minister to visit Iran soon to discuss the issue.

Asked about the nature of his two-week visit to Lebanon, the Iranian official said it followed the cease-fire and the aggression on Lebanon and sought to assist Lebanon in rebuilding and in repairing the damage caused by the barbaric Israeli attacks on the south and al-Biqa'.

He pointed out that he met the Lebanese political leadership and toured the southern areas to assess the assistance Iran can provide and determine the projects it will help finance, projects that will cost tens of millions of dollars.

The Iranian undersecretary is expected to leave Beirut for home later today.

Iran: Rafsanjani Discusses Cooperation With Sudanese Minister

LD2105185596 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 1630 GMT 21 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] President 'Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani today received 'Awad Ahmad al-Jabaz, the Sudanese minister of energy and mining, who handed him a written message from Sudanese President 'Umar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir.

Mr. al-Jabaz described the results of his talks with our country's authorities as very postive. He also said that his country's government and people were in favor of expanding ties with Iran.

Mr Hashemi-Rafsanjani welcomed the deepening of technical, economic, and trade cooperation between Iran and the Islamic state of Sudan. He said that the strengthening of the Iran-Sudan joint [economic] commission was effective in accelerating the expansion of cooperation between the two countries.

Iran: Railroad Seen as Means To Neutralize Embargoes

NC2105130396 Tehran HAMSHAHRI in Persian 13 May 96 p 1

[Editorial: "The Defeat of the Thesis of an Embargo on Iran"]

[FBIS Translated Text] This morning the 295-km Mashhad-Sarakhs- Tajan railroad will be inaugurated in the presence of high-level representatives, including 12 presidents, vice presidents, and ministers of 55 countries, who will be congregating and conferring on a level not seen in Iran as they witness the auspicious ceremonies linking the Iranian railroad with Eastern and Central Asia.

The route is very important economically and strategically and constitutes a turning point for Iran's economic relations with the newly liberated Eastern and Central Asian countries. But the political importance of the railroad far exceeds its economic importance.

The presence of high-level representatives of 55 large and small countries on Iran's northeastern borders is a major political victory in circumstances in which a complete multilateral political and economic embargo and the isolation of Iran is a line being hotly pursued internationally. This is a sign of our active diplomacy internationally and the strategic importance that is inherent in our great Islamic homeland. Hence the inauguration ceremonies in the border town of Sarakhs show that these embargoes are being neutralized.

Another reality is that the efficiency and dynamism of the Mashhad-Sarakhs-Tajan railroad, especially from the economic aspect, is linked entirely with the political situation and processes in the region, especially the relations between Iran and its neighboring countries. In a tense political climate fraught with misunderstandings, you cannot expect this route to be used to the full. The fate of Iranian rail links with Turkey and the former Soviet Union is proof of the veracity of this statement.

Despite all this the inauguration of the Mashhad-Sarakhs-Tajan railroad and its immense economic and geopolitical importance is evidence of the opportunities lost by our country in recent years and continuing in some areas. Without the Bafq-Mashhad railroad the optimal and economic use of the Mashhad-Sarakhs and Bafq-Bandar- e'Abbas routes is not possible.

The crux of the problem is that in our country, which annually imports foodstuffs worth $3-4 billion, the suspension of the Bafq- Mashhad construction operation for lack of money seems quite illogical. Is our country—with its vast wealth and national production—unable to

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complete such a strategic segment of the railroad? Can we not save the money spent on importing and selling foreign cigarettes at home at a fifth of the price abroad—around 6 to 7 billion rials annually at the cost of 25 rials a cigarette—and allocate the sum to this vital route?

The opening of the Mashhad-Sarakhs route, and its importance, proves that it is a vital obligation to delineate our priorities and allocate national resources to them. If the Mashhad-Sarakhs route is so vital, then the Bafq-Mashhad and Tehran-Khosravi routes should also be completed and the entire country's railroad renovated. Two- way tracks should be laid on the Tehran-Mashhad and Tehran- Khorramshahr routes, which are also vital, and should be identified as priorities.

Iran: Oil Minister, Ukrainian Official Discuss Agreements

LD2105140396 Tehran IRNA in English 1226 GMT 21 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, May 21, IRNA — The visiting Ukrainian deputy premier, Anatoliy Kinakh, and Iranian Oil Minister Gholam Reza 'Aqazadeh-Kho'i here Tuesday discussed ways and means for the realization of the agreements already reached between the two countries in the fields of oil and gas and for economic cooperation.

During the meeting, Kinakh termed as important formation of the joint economic commission for the implementation of the agreements signed by the two countries.

He added that within the framework of the first session of the joint commission, an agreement will be inked by the two sides on banking relations, supporting joint ventures and cancelling double taxation.

The Iranian minister in the meeting voiced Iran's readiness to sell oil to Ukraine and also outlined Iran's plans for transfer of gas.

A joint project for the installation of gas pipelines is to be included in a letter of understanding to be signed at the joint economic commission.

Iran: Economic Cooperation Agreement Signed With Ukraine

LD2105123796 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 0930 GMT 21 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Ukraine signed an economic cooperation agreement in Tehran this morning. Avoiding extra tax charges, encouraging and and supporting investment in the two countries, and arranging for financial and banking cooperation are among the provisions of the agreement.

Morteza Mohammad-Khani, minister of economic affairs and finance, stated when he was signing the cooperation agreement that the Islamic Republic of Iran places special importance on Ukraine and intends to expand its economic and trade relations with that country in all fields.

Anatoliy Kyrypovych Kinakh, Ukraine's deputy prime minister for industry, pointed to the daily growth of Iran's economic power and said that the establishment of trade and banking facilities would open the way for the expansion of the two countries' economic relations.

It was also agreed at the meeting that Iran would purchase wheat from Ukraine and export fuel.

Iran: Tehran, Kiev Explore Areas of Technical Cooperation

LD2005202296 Tehran IRNA in English 1904 GMT 20 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, May 20, IRNA — Iran injected over dlrs. 20 billion in the industrial sector in its first five- year economic development plan (1989-1994), achieving an overall economic growth of 8 percent, said Industries Minister Mohammad-Reza Nematzadeh here today at the first Tehran-Kiev joint economic and commercial session.

He told the head of the Ukrainian side, Deputy Premier Anatoliy Kinakh, that the investment was mostly in the petrochemicals, cement, construction materials, metals and agro-industries.

The industrial sector saw the major portion of growth with respect to other sectors of economy, attaining a growth of 12 percent annually. Exports of non-oil commodities at the same time, he added, enjoyed an average of 30 percent annual growth.

Nematzadeh said that Iran and Ukraine had much to gain by strengthening economic and industrial ties, and besides bilateral cooperation could enter into trilateral cooperation with Azerbaijan Republic and Central Asian member states of the 10-nation Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

He expressed hope that the current problems in the way of manufacture of aircraft engines would be removed at the earliest on the basis of the contract concluded earlier between Iran and Ukraine for manufacture of aircraft.

The Ukrainian official also called for expansion of trade and industrial ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran,

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and said that his country can enter into cooperation with Iran in such fields advanced areas of technology as aircraft industry, shipbuilding, space activity and rocket manufacture.

He called Iran and Ukraine as "two important centres of the Asian and European continents in view of their strategic geo-political location, and said that besides cooperation in surface, sea and air transportation, the two countries can promote ties in the minerals, and metallurgical sectors.

The Tehran-Kiev joint commission is to discuss cooperation in the electronic field especially in satellite technology and the designing and building of locomotives, power plants and refineries.

Iran: TEHRAN TIMES Criticizes UN 'Double Standard'

LD2205094296 Tehran IRNA in English 0852 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, May 22, IRNA — The English daily 'TEHRAN TIMES' Wednesday criticized the U.N. double-standard, saying the body has failed to fulfil its international commitments due to the influence of certain countries.

Commenting on the U.N.-Iraq agreement on Monday allowing Baghdad to export up to dlrs. two billion of oil every six months to buy food and medicine, the editorial wrote, "it is clear that people should not pay for the mistakes and misdeeds of their leaders who are power maniacs and build castles in the air."

The U.N. has frequently proven that it is able to implement its resolutions if it wishes to do so, remarked the paper, adding the only answer to the question of why some U.N. resolutions adopted in the past have remained unimplemented for so long, is that the U.N. is following a double-standard policy.

"Out of so many resolutions issued by the U.N. in condemnation of the Zionist aggressions and demanding punitive measures against Israel, not a single one has been implemented," it noted.

World public opinion no longer accepts a double-standard policy by an international entity which claims to be the patron of justice," concluded the daily.

Iran: Iraqi Authorities Still Suspicious of UN Resolution 986

LD2105194696 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 1004 GMT 21 May 96

[Unattributed commentary]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Yesterday, 'Abd-al-Amir al-Anbari and Hans Corell, the heads of the Iraqi and UN negotiating teams, signed a memorandum of understanding on implementing UN Security Council Resolution 986 which provides for limited sales of Iraqi oil to finance food and medicine for the Iraqi people. The agreement follows Iraq's backtracking from its previous position, which called for changes in some of the provisions of the resolution.

Among the factors accounting for this change in Iraq's stance are the failure of that country's political and propaganda efforts, including holding presidential and parliamentary elections in a bid to provoke public opinion into pushing for lifting economic sanctions against that country. Also the belief on the part of Iraqi officials that if they were not to accept that resolution and if the existing situation were allowed to continue, this would, more than anything else, be in the interest of those who oppose the lifting of sanctions, including the United States and Britain. Moreover, Iraq's optimism towards the stances adopted by France and Russia in that the acceptance of the resolution would pave the way for the lifting of all sanctions and, more important than this, the rise in the mortality rate due to the sanctions, all contributed to the change in Iraq's stance.

According to the latest reports received on the pitiful state of the Iraqi people, more than two-thirds of them are suffering from hunger and the number of deaths caused by the continuation of the sanctions has risen to 1 million.

The Iraqi Government has strongly objected to two clauses in Resolution 986 ever since it was passed, believing that their full implementation would violate the territorial integrity of Iraq and also assist the U.S. policy of dismembering Iraq. Even though in the concluding section of the resolution, and at Iraq's insistence, certain guarantees have been given about the preservation of Iraq's territorial integrity, the Iraqi government has, nevertheless, always regarded the resolution with some suspicion. And even now, in spite of having accepted the resolution, it has expressed its reservations about the future political consequences. [passage omitted]

From the time that Resolution 986 was passed, the view has been put forward that its provisions had more to do with replenishing UN financial needs and fulfilling the

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political objectives of those who opposed the lifting of sanctions, including the United States and Britain, than with humanitarian considerations.

It is in this respect that the United Statesa has, in its latest stance, announced that the acceptance of Resolution 986 and other resolutions will ultimately prepare the ground for the fall of the ruling Iraq regime.

Iran: Editorial Criticizes U.S. Policy in Persian Gulf

LD2005145896 Tehran IRAN NEWS in English 16 May 96 p 2

[Editorial: "Determination To Deter Aggression? Where? Will the United States Explain?"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The U.S. Air Force will station 30 fighter jets in Qatar for two months as part of a so-called mission which the Pentagon will implement for the third time in the region.

In the first part, last fall, it stationed fighter planes in Bahrain, and in the second in Jordan in April.

The U.S. Defense Department tries to make the world believe that economically, politically and strategically important Persian Gulf is under threat. But the Pentagon and the White House fail to pinpoint the "potential danger."

Does the United States, by threat of aggression, mean Iraq? It is no secret that the Iraqi regime is no longer in a position to even think about making a third blunder after its failed aggressions against Iran and Iraq [Kuwait].

Is Iran a potential danger? That too is wrong as we all know that Iran enjoys cordial and friendly relations with the Persian Gulf countries particularly with Qatar. Exchange of high-level visits between the two countries' officials is continuing and relations are improving further each day.

The United States is talking about potential danger at a time when President Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani is inviting regional and world leaders to make greater efforts in improving the condition of their people.

The fact is that the United States wants to keep this region under the clutches of its military machine. Through using its mass media, America wants to create a phobia of an imaginary enemy in order to pursue the following objectives:

A — The United States is following a specific policy which has been formulated to snatch the petro-dollars back through weapons sales to the oil-rich countries in the Persian Gulf and prevent the region, which is heading towards economic development and higher standard of life, from improving.

B — Another objective, the United States follows, through keeping its forces in the region, is to control the crude oil prices. In the past it has been proved that the United States is against the crude reaching its natural market price. So, it follows the policy of sowing the seeds of discord among the regional countries.

C — The United States wants to have complete hold on the economic and industrial lifeline of a great portion of the world, the Persian Gulf, before the European Union completes its unifying process because of the simple reason that Europe is a major buyer of the region's crude oil.

Considering the above-mentioned facts, the regional countries should keep their common interests above all else and prevent foreign powers, whose motives are selfish and detrimental to the area, from gaining a military foothold in the region.

Iran: Paper on Clinton's 'Blunderingly Blind' Support for Israel

LD2005145996 Tehran KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL in English 16 May 96 p 2

[Political Commentary: "America's Jewish Thinking" by "Yasmin P."]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] How can the label "honest broker" be applied to the American role in the Middle East peace process when its stand and thinking is so completely and obviously Jewish?

To be an honest broker requires certain criteria — commitment to credibility, no biases and a balanced approach to all parties involved. But where Washington's role is concerned, these are conspicuous by their absence. A torpor has set into the peace process because human tragedies continue as the "honest broker" looks the other way instead of crying halt to the culprit's crimes and genuinely addressing peace issues.

The Clinton administration particularly, has put all its stakes on the Jewish entity to the extent that it exonerates every Israeli act of terrorism even when the entire world cries foul over Zionist violation of all international rules and norms.

It is obvious that both Washington and Tel Aviv are in a mutual pact to accommodate each other's "interests" in the Middle East. But why Clinton is so blunderingly blind that he is tilting the scales fully in favour of the Zionists, when at the same time he also seems to be friendly with the Arabs, is a puzzle to Middle East watchers.

Political pundits are increasingly beginning to question Washington's mediation in issues concerning the region.

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While it showers support and generosity on the Zionist lawlessness, it spurns sentiments of the Arabs outright.

After the Qana massacre, the U.S. entered into a military pact with Israel. A pact is almost always targeted at a common enemy, which means that the U.S.-Israel enemy are the Arabs who are Israel's neighbours. Under the military accord, the range of missiles which are to be supplied to Israel by the U.S. can reach even Islamic states in the vicinity.

All these Middle East excesses committed by the Americans leave little room and hope for a solution to regional problems. Neither will they achieve Israeli compliance to UN Security Council resolutions. In the ultimate analysis, the Arab governments have one option — seriously rethink their foreign policy relations vis-a-vis Washington.

Iran: Germany's Kinkel Warns U.S. Over Iran Trade Sanctions

LD2005125596 Tehran IRNA in English 1227 GMT 20 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] London, May 20, IRNA — German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel has again warned the U.S. it could face retaliatory measures from the European Union if third countries suffered under Washington's trade sanctions laws against Iran, Libya and Cuba. The new warning, reported by MIDDLE EAST ECONOMIC DIGEST, follows Kinkel's visit to Washington last month where he rejected U.S. pressure against Germany to severe ties with Iran.

Addressing the American-Jewish committee on April 8, the German foreign minister reiterated that the European policy of 'critical dialogue' was the best way in relations with Iran. The restatement of EU policy follows a consortium of 42 German banks joining together to offer unlimited amounts of long-term loans to Iran last week for projects approved under the country's second five year development plan.

The EU has expressed increasing alarm over the past few months with U.S. congressional threats to use extra-territorial legislation to punish foreign firms trading with Iran and warned that it could damage transatlantic relations.

Japan, the biggest purchaser of Iranian crude, has also expressed opposition to Washington's policy of trying to use oil as a political weapon against Tehran.

In an interview with PETROLEUM ARGUS this week, the Petroleum Association of Japan's president, Yuri Idemitsu was quoted saying that trading transactions were studied on a commercial basis. Despite U.S. sanctions, he said Japan was still buying Iranian oil as Japanese diplomatic policy towards Iran was "different from that of the U.S."

Iran: Opening of Israeli Trade Office in Oman Criticized

NC2205192396 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Arabic 1745 GMT 22 May 96

[From "The News and Views" feature]

[FBIS Translated Text] The head of the Israeli trading arm that opened in Oman recently began his contacts and talks with Omani officials yesterday. Oman is the first Arab country in the Persian Gulf to permit an Israeli trading arm on its territory. Oman is scheduled to open its own trade office in Tel Aviv soon. Oman has been the forerunner of regional Arab countries in building bridges with the usurper Zionist entity. Oman took the first public step on this path when it approved the participation of a Zionist delegation at the Muscat conference on water in April 1994. Yitzhaq Rabin's visit to Muscat late in 1994 confirmed the growth of Omani-Israeli relations. The visit to Oman by Shim'on Peres, prime minister of the Zionist entity, in April therefore came as no surprise. Peres also visited Qatar at the same time.

The growth of Israeli relations with Arab countries of the Persian Gulf runs counter to the assertions of the Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC] countries, which say they will not establish ties with the usurper Zionist entity before Syria reaches an agreement with it. Thus, it is obvious that Oman's and Qatar's rush toward normalizing ties with Israel has caused a big gap among the GCC countries. The opening of an Israeli trade office in Muscat will undermine the positions of Syria and Lebanon in the negotiations with the Zionist entity. Obviously, the U.S. role in achieving the current rapprochement between Muscat and Tel Aviv cannot be ignored. Washington has constantly called on the Arab countries to establish ties with the Zionist entity. Washington has its own means of pressure to achieve this goal. The serious thing here is that the normalization of ties between Oman and Israel will enable Israel to infiltrate the region and threaten its security and resources.

Iran: Joint Iran-Qatar Commission Holds Session

LD1905195296 Tehran IRIB Television Third Program Network in English 1815 GMT 19 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Iran and Qatar have explored ways of increasing the volume of their trade at the first session of high level Irano-Qatari joint commission. Iran's Energy Minister Mr. [Bizhan] Zangeneh

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and the visiting Qatari Finance Minister Mr. [Muhammad Bin-Khalifah Al] Thani attended the session at which the promotion of the two countries' customs cooperation was also debated and the necessary decisions were taken. Among the other subjects discussed were reinforced collaboration in the anti-drug campaign and closer partnership of Iranian and Qatari companies in tenders relating to regional engineering and technical projects.

The second session of the commission will be held in Doha, the capital of Qatar.

Iran: Tehran Views Indian Elections, Muslims' Stance

NC2005082396 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 0345 GMT 20 May 96

[Commentary by the News Research and Commentary Group]

[FBIS Translated Text] The Indian president's call on Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] leader Vajpayee to form a cabinet has sparked off various reactions inside India. The new Indian prime minister has 10 days to gain the votes of the independent deputies in the Indian Parliament, who have more than 50 seats, in addition to the support of his allies in the rightist faction.

On the eve of their efforts to gain a vote of confidence from the National Assembly to form a central government, the leaders of the extremist Hindu BJP are facing many difficulties, especially because of the social structure of the 900-million-strong Indian society. In parallel with propounding policies and plans for economic reforms they have tried to readjust their approach, which mostly inclines toward the Hindu majority. Within this context, following the statement by India's new interior minister on an equal approach to the Indian minorities, and, especially, the Muslims, who form the second largest population following the Hindu majority, the new prime minister has stressed that all religions will enjoy equal treatment.

Political observers believe the efforts by new Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee to improve social equality in India should be assessed in line with the BJP's election promises to the Hindu majority. Varying opinions have been voiced by the Indian Muslims— who played an outstanding role in India's independence from British colonialism in 1947—on BJP rule over India.

Despite the agreements and disagreements expressed by the Muslims and the other minorities in India, the abrogation of Article 370 of India's Constitution granting Kashmir special status, as well as the implementation of equal civil rights and the construction of a shrine in Ayodhya by the BJP, could result in extensive Muslim opposition to the party.

It seems that before taking any steps Muslim society in India is waiting to see how the BJP will act after [11 Khordad] 31 May, when the BJP should gain the majority in parliament.

Iran: Canadian Ambassador Discusses Economic Ties

LD2005082696 Tehran IRNA in English 0759 GMT 20 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kerman, May 20, IRNA — Canadian Ambassador to Tehran Donald P. McLennan in a meeting here Sunday with Kerman Governor General Morteza Bank voiced his country's willingness to promote its trade and economic ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The two countries' trade exchange is handled by 10 Canadian companies in Iran and six Iranian companies in Canada, he said.

Pistachio, carpet, machinery and sports wear are among major Iranian items exported to Canada, the ambassador stated.

Meanwhile, the Iranian official called for Canada's cooperation in the field of agriculture, irrigation and paper manufacturing industry.

Iran: Vice President Habibi Holds Talks With Syrian Minister

LD2005181096 Tehran IRNA in English 1738 GMT 20 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, May 20 [IRNA] — First Vice- President Hassan Habibi and the visiting Syrian Minister of Economy and Foreign Trade Muhammad al-'Imadi discussed expansion of economic and cultural relations in addition to the present political cooperation between the two countries.

Al-'Imadi, terming as "positive" the results of his meetings with Iranian officials, said that expansion of economic and cultural bilateral relations will pave the way for the two countries to further strengthen their political ties.

Habibi in response, referred to the two countries' historical background during the long period of the Islamic civilization, and agreed on expansion of Tehran-Damascus economic and cultural relations.

He pointed to the existence of skilled manpower and rich economic resources in the region, and called it an

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important factor that could lead to the formation of a big common market for the region's industry in cooperation with the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and other countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia and India.

Iran: Housing Minister, Syrian Ministers Ink Memorandum of Understanding

LD2005201496 Tehran IRNA in English 1813 GMT 20 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, May 20, IRNA — Iran's Minister of Housing and Urban Development 'Abbas Ahmad-Akhundi and the visiting Syrian Minister of Economy and Foreign Trade Muhammad al-'Imadi inked a memorandum of understanding here today at the end of the 3-day Tehran-Damascus joint Economic Commission.

The memorandum will pave the way for the two countries to further expand their cooperation in the sectors of industries, energy and oil, agriculture, transportation, telecommunications, housing and related installations.

During their talks the two sides also agreed on holding of exhibitions by the private sector in the other country to boost economic cooperation.

Al-'Imadi suggested that Iran and Syria can enter into joint ventures and that his country was interested in building a cement factory with an annual production capacity of one million ton in Syria with Iranian collaboration.

The Syrian minister left here this evening after his 3-day stay during which he met the country's senior officials and discussed promotion of economic and cultural relations between the two countries in addition to the existing political cooperation.

Iran: Radio Commentary Views Iran-Kuwait Talks

LD2105172196 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in English 1130 GMT 21 May 96

[Unattributed commentary]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Kuwaiti parliamentary speaker, Ahmad 'Abd al-Aziz al-Sa'dun, ended his three-day visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran yesterday, 20 May, and was seen off at the airport by the Iranian Majlis speaker, Mr. 'Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri, (?at) his departure for Kuwait.

The Kuwaiti official visited Iran to expand bilateral relations, especially parliamentary cooperation, on which constructive dialogue was held between Iranian and Kuwaiti officials. Relations between the two countries' parliaments, the expansion of bilateral economic ties, and regional and international issues were discussed in these dialogues. Security in the Persian Gulf, however, was of the most importance in the Irano-Kuwaiti talks in Tehran.

According to political observers, although Iran and Kuwait have different views on some issues, such as the presence of foreign military forces in the region, the record of their mutual relations during the past year shows both countries' efforts toward the strengthening of friendly relations between the two sides. In line with this, in his meetings with the Iranian president, the speaker of the Islamic Consultative Majles and the foreign minister, Mr. 'Abd al-Aziz al-Sa'dun, once more expressed his country's willingness to have extensive relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In any case, the elimination of turmoil in the region, the expansion of relations with states in the area, non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries, and the maintenance of peace and security by the regional states themselves are among the strategic principles of the Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign policy, which pertain to Iranian relations with Kuwait as well.

It is exactly from this viewpoint that, in his talks with the Kuwaiti official, the Iranian Majles speaker clearly stated Iran's opposition to any kind of presence by foreign forces in the region and stressed on the fact that, as major forces in the region, we can provide for the security of our area ourselves and do not need any kind of help from foreigners, and that we have to take the opportunity from the United States to misuse and abuse the situation in the Persian Gulf region.

Referring to the strengthening of the U.S. radio station in Kuwait, the Iranian speaker also expressed Iran's concern over such actions by the United States and emphasized that Iran would not tolerate the use of such facilities against its national interests.

On the whole, it can be said that proximity between the Iranian and Kuwaiti views on bilateral, regional, and Muslim world issues is one of the major characteristics of the relations between the two sides. This is why, considering the steps already taken by the two countries' parliaments to strengthen mutual ties, Irano-Kuwaiti ties can be said to be looking forward to a brighter future on the condition that both countries will seriously counter foreign conspiracies in the region aimed at sabotaging relations between the two nations.

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Iran: Afghan Minister Discusses Ties With FM Official

LD2105184296 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in English 1230 GMT 21 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] In Tehran, the visiting Afghan Commerce Minister Sayd Hosayn Alemi Balkh has held talks with Ala'eddin Borujerdi, the Iranian deputy foreign minister for Asian and Pacific affairs. During the meeting, recent changes in Afghanistan and bilateral relations were discussed.

Mr. Balkh expressed gratitude for Iran's continued efforts to restore peace in Afghanistan. He hoped for a reduction of the Afghan government's problems with the opposing groups and for the restoration of peace, security, and calm in Afghanistan. During the meeting, he also called for an expansion of cooperation with Iran in the fields of trade, education, and industry.

Explaining Iran's policy on the Afghan problem, Mr. Borujerdi described progress in the Afghan government's talks with Hezb-e Eslami-ye Afghanistan as an important step towards a solution of the current problems in Afghanistan. He expressed the hope that other parties would also choose talks as the best way of resolving problems.

Iran: Legislation Deters Prospective Foreign Investors

LD2005141396 Tehran IRAN NEWS in English 18 May 96 p 2

[Editorial article: "Iran Has All the Prerequisites for Foreign Investment, But..."]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] A significant exhibition was organized in Tokyo to woo foreign investment on international level. The Islamic Republic of Iran was also in the Japanese capital where 160 organizations related to foreign investment from 60 countries were present.

There are certain preconditions which must be met before investment in a country becomes attractive to foreign capital. They include, geopolitical situation, manpower, natural resources, energy at a reasonable price, and political stability.

Iran can rightly boast that it meets all these preconditions. Creating several free-trade zones in different parts of Iran was a correct move towards foreign collaboration in industrial and economic areas. But, despite all that, Tehran cannot reach its desired objective of inviting prospective investors to bring their capital to the country.

Experts believe that our country's laws and regulations in commercial and economic spheres are not clear and stable. Frequent changes in these laws and regulations deter prospective investors not only from foreign countries but also from within Iran itself.

The existing ambiguities in the Constitution regarding foreign investment are another drawback responsible for the undesirable trends in this sector.

We can expect serious partners in foreign investors only if these ambiguities are clarified. Iran has all the other necessary requirements for attracting business and economic partners from other countries.

Besides the ideal geopolitical situation, Iran owns a large labor force at a reasonable cost, natural resources, and political stability. These elements are more than enough for inviting foreign investment.

Last week's inauguration of Mashhad-Sarakhs-Tedzhen railway network is an added attraction. It provides the best possible opportunities for commercial and economic activities by the interested foreign parties both in Iran and in its neighbouring countries through using facilities of the Islamic Republic, if the problems mentioned earlier are resolved properly.

On the issue of foreign investment, Iranian authorities should not rely on the governments which blindly follow U.S.-dictated biased policies. The best example is that of Japan which froze the second installment of the yen-loan to Iran for building a dam.

Experts believe the freeze of Japanese loan is a political move meant to appease the United States. Iran will never have any problems in inviting sincere and genuine foreign investors if the constitutional and legal hurdles are removed.

Iran: Numbers Living Below Poverty Line Drop to 17 Percent

LD2005181696 Tehran IRNA in English 1714 GMT 20 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, May 20 (IRNA) — Figures for those living below the poverty line in Iran have fallen to 17 from the frightening 47 percent before the triumph of Islamic revolution in 1979.

According to Qadiri Abyaneh, presidential deputy for communication and propagation affairs, the government has taken important steps over the past 17 years to reduce social poverty.

In his address to the Congress on Survey of Poverty and Related Issues in Iran, Abyaneh said that part of government measures in this regard was the spending of dlrs. 11 billion annually for fuel and energy consumption.

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He said there should be plans for sound exploitation of the country's deposits for attaining economic progress and cutting dependence on oil revenues, which could contribute to the elimination of social poverty.

Iran: 'Ansar-e' Hezbollah Group Praises IRNA, Denounces Israel

LD1905204996 Tehran IRNA in English 1950 GMT 19 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, May 19, IRNA - A number of the members of "Ansar-e" Hezbollah group (Party of God) assembled in front of the office of the Islamic Republic News Agency and the U.N. office in Tehran on Saturday 19 May condemning the attacks of the Zionist regime on the defenseless people of south Lebanon.

The protestors denounced the attacks as well as the 16-day aggression of the Zionist regime on the innocent women and children of Lebanon, lashing out at the indifference of the world community to the Zionist atrocities in "Qana".

The spokesman of the demonstrators, Hoseyn Allah Karam, told IRNA that "our aim for this protest assembly is to condemn the Zionist regime massacres of the defenseless innocent Lebanese civilians, specially because Peres has undertaken personal responsibility for the Qana pre-meditated incursions. [closing quotations marks missing as received]

He said the "forced arrest" of Abu Marzuq is not lawful but is interpretted as "kidnapping" and "non-observance of human rights" to which the world has remained dead silent.

The Hezbollah spokesman added that despite its limited resources, IRNA has been able to give good coverage to the news of the world of Islam, while the world news agencies function under the umbrella of the Zionist domination.

Iran: Khamene'i Approves Amnesty for Some Military Offenders

LD2105120196 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 0930 GMT 21 May 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] On the eve of 3 Khordad [23 May], the anniversary of the liberation of Khorramshahr [1982], his eminence Ayatollah 'Ali Khamene'i, esteemed leader of the Islamic Republic, approved an amnesty and reduced sentences for military offenders whose sentences would be completed by 3 Khordad 1375 [1996].

The request for amnesty and reduction in sentences for this group of offenders came from Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi, head of the judicial branch. [passage omitted]

Iran: SALAM on Readers' Questions on Elections, High Prices

NC2205072896 Tehran SALAM in Persian 2 May 96 p 3

[From the "Hello SALAM" column]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] [Unidentified caller] We were very happy that you did not gain seats in the Majles. Since the people also know you well, they did not vote for you. You, the leftist faction, are very ... [ellipsis as published] and you are questioning the elections without any cause. Mr. Nateq-Nuri is also a very good person.

[SALAM] This respected reader also included many other insulting words, which we have refrained from publishing. But if his objective is to encourage and to direct the other side, it would have been much better if he had listed what he sees to be wrong in the faction, which he calls the leftist faction without any cause. And if he had any comments he should have made them. With this method, the readers would definitely be better able to see where the problems lie and to draw a conclusion.

[Unidentified reader] Please ask the officials to announce the number of invalid votes.

[SALAM] We have made this suggestion several times. But apparently the election officials at the Interior Ministry have preferred to continue without answering public opinion; and the president has also greatly praised their efforts. We have nothing more to add. May the government stand strong and may our glory always live on.

[Unidentified reader] Please speak about high prices and inflation and tell us until when this situation will continue. Will it continue only until the end of Mr. Rafsanjani's term in office, or will it continue even after that? Please tell us so that my family and I, who number four people, will commit suicide and free ourselves since we see no other way to save ourselves from the high prices and inflation.

[SALAM] Of course a pious person would not do such a thing because suicide does not solve any problems. Suicide, like murder, is a major crime which is punished by burning in hell. Therefore, it is not only not a salvation, but an eternal suffering. Also, standing strong to face your problems is the beginning of victory over

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them. While we accept that high prices is a general problem faced by all the low-income strata and families, we also admit that it is only through more efforts that this great problem can be tackled and, God willing, a solution can be found. [passage omitted]

Iran: Questions on High Prices, Elections, Majles Answered

NC2205075596 Tehran SALAM in Persian 6 May 96 p 3

[From the "Hello SALAM" column]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] [Unidentified reader] The most major process that is threatening the values of the revolution is the Hojjatiyeh process, which has not been dealt with until now. This process is supported by a specific economic strata and its objective is to use this strata both for economic and political purposes. By wielding clubs, resorting to threats, and removing devoted groups from the outset of the revolution, the Hojjatiyeh process has actually been able to acquire a great deal of power. I believe that these people are the best example of American or—better said—British Islam!

[Unidentified reader] In view of the teachings of the great Prophet, peace be upon him and his scion, when poverty enters a home, faith moves out. Therefore, we, the Iranian nation, ask God almighty to help us so that we can eliminate poverty and thus save our religion.

[Unidentified reader] Although the remarks, complaints, and shouts of the oppressed people are futile, the high prices that have emerged after the elections are equal to the billions of dollars that the criminal America and the treacherous Israel are spending to create dissatisfaction and... [ellipsis as published]. Why should the prices of goods increase each hour and the people be crushed under the burden of high prices?

[SALAM] Basically, the management in the government operates as though the beginning of the new year [21 March marks the beginning of the Iranian new year] means the introduction of higher prices. A brief study shows that since the beginning of Farvardin [month beginning 21 March] until now, the most major news on a daily basis has been on price hikes or on the prices of goods and services.

[Unidentified reader] In a society where inflation is created, people without a stable income are harmed and people with a fluctuating income exploit inflation. This is why inflation has always been to the benefit of capitalism. The most logical and fair way to fight inflation is for the government to establish cooperative companies for civil servants and people with a stable income. And when there is no inflation, the government should purchase from private manufacturers and stock goods so that when inflation emerges, it can place the goods that it has already purchased and stocked at the disposal of the civil servants at low prices.

[Unidentified reader] I propose to all those who organize the marches in the country on various occasions, such as Jerusalem Day, 22 Bahman [11 February—the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution] and so on, to organize a march in support of the government and its programs. Only then will they see how many people will participate in this march! And only then will it become clear who the supporters of the government's programs are!

[Unidentified reader] Why do the deputies prefer to pound on the various factions instead of dealing with the country's significant problems in their pre-agenda speeches?

[Unidentified reader] Although His Eminence the Imam, may his soul be sanctified, had banned the intervention by the armed forces in the country's political life, as a student of theology, I would like to ask the newspaper's officials: Wasn't the recent stand by the [Islamic Revolution Guards] Corps' during the elections in favor of the rightist faction not intervention in the determination of the country's political fate?!

[SALAM] Experience has proven to us that we are unable to confront guns. Please excuse us for not answering this question. God will give them their answer. [passage omitted]

Iran: Paper Praises Officials in Charge of Book Censorship

LD1905164296 Tehran SOBH in Persian 14 May 96 p 1

[Editorial by the editor-in-chief: "Publication of Books and Encouraging Developments"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Some encouraging and positive signs have emerged in the book publication sector following the changes and developments that have taken place in the cultural directorate of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

Now, contrary to past practices, a positive attitude exists towards the assessment and review of books to ensure that the publishing domain remains sound and to neutralize the onslaughts and plots in this arena. Thus, the relevant officials — believing that food for thought, just like food for the body, should be free from every kind of contamination and decay — are preoccupied with formulating and implementing principled policies with regard to publishing.

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An interesting point in all this is that following the changes noted above, the publication of books that encourage vice and atheism and are full of insults has, on the one hand, been curbed, whereas, on the other, some hasty steps have been taken to issue permits for the release of books which, for no reason at all, have been gathering dust in the warehouses of some publishing houses.

Some reports and studies indicate that in the past, some publishers' books were banned due to completely imaginary reasons — for instance, because they may have contained on a page a sentence such as: "...and the branches of the tree were dancing in the wind"! Yet books that contained really trite and decadent material, had been issued with publication permits. This manner of operating meant that while some publishers who were not to the liking of the gentlemen in the ministry felt that they had been somewhat punished and became rather pessimistic towards the system, this was also used, as and when needed, as a response to those who protested about the lack of censorship.

The action taken by the new cultural directorate of the Islamic Guidance Ministry and the director in charge of books, at this year's international book fair in Tehran, was commendable. On the basis of reports received, a number of publishers who, in spite of prior notice, proceeded to sell some books which had not been issued with permits and contained decadent and wicked material, were confronted with firmness and their stalls were closed down.

These hope-inspiring signs makes us duty-bound to praise the relevant officials, especially the respected minister for Islamic guidance, for having paved the way for such beneficial changes. We call for an increase and continuation of these hope-inspiring and constructive developments, especially when reports speak of extensive intrigues and pressures aiming at humiliating the new officials and driving them out of the picture.

Pakistan

Pakistan: Indian Allegations of Involvement in Delhi Blast Rejected

BK2205135696 Islamabad PTV Television Network in English 1300 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Pakistan has taken strong exception to Indian home secretary's baseless allegations against Pakistan's involvement in yesterday's blast which killed many people in New Delhi. The Indian home secretary's fulminations against Pakistan are not new and clearly point to the mind-set which the Indian establishment harbors against Pakistan. Pakistan has repeatedly said it condemns terrorism in any form or manifestation. It is India which has pioneered terrorism by interfering in the internal affairs of its neighbors. It would be advisable if the Indian leaders and establishment, instead of putting the blame on their neighbors, reexamine their own weaknesses.

Pakistan: Sikander Hayat Khan Reelected President of Azad Kashmir

BK2205120096 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in Urdu 1000 GMT 22 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Sardar Sikander Hayat Khan was reelected president of Azad Jammu and Kashmir [AJK] by the AJK Legislative Assembly in Muzaffarabad today. He got 36 votes, while one vote was declared invalid. Sardar Sikander Hayat Khan was the lone candidate left in the field for the office of the president after the withdrawal of nomination papers by two other candidates of the Muslim Conference this morning. The opposition had neither fielded any candidate for this post nor did it participate in the voting. Earlier, the AJK High Court had rejected two petitions challenging the holding of the presidential election.

Pakistan: Defense Officials on Shipment of Equipment From U.S.

BK2205120196 Rawalpindi JANG in Urdu 22 May 96 pp 8, 5

[Report by JANG's "special correspondent"]

[FBIS Translated Text] It has been learnt through reliable sources that before supplying the military equipment worth $368 million to Pakistan, the U.S. military will provide technical assistance for making this equipment serviceable. The military equipment worth $368 million that was manufactured for Pakistan and is lying at 50 different places in the United States is now being shifted to one place. Important diplomatic sources in Islamabad have told JANG that the equipment will be modified in such a manner that it is not upgraded, because under the Pressler Amendment Pakistan cannot be given the facility of an upgradation of military equipment.

According to the U.S. sources, the Pakistani Ministry of Defense has to reach certain decisions regarding the details of the equipment. The Government of Pakistan has not informed us about these decisions. The sooner the defense ministry makes its decisions, the sooner the equipment will be brought to Pakistan. According to the sources, the additional amount of $124 million that Pakistan had paid for the purchase of F-16's under the Peace Gate IV has already been returned to Pakistan. Other agreements are also being scrutinized and if any amount is due to Pakistan, it will be returned.

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Meanwhile, responsible sources say that a meeting of the officials of the Ministry of Defense production and the representatives of the three armed forces has been held. Matters related to the shipment of the military equipment worth $368 million were reviewed and important decisions about the details of the equipment were reached in this meeting.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka: Minister Says Political Solution Key to Ethnic Peace

BK2205135596 Colombo DAILY NEWS in English 22 May 96

[Report by L. B. Wijayasiri from Hanguranketa—received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Irrigation, Power and Energy Minister and Deputy Minister of Defence General Anuruddha Ratwatte said the President, Prime Minister and he were Sinhala Buddhists and so were many others in the government.

They would not be parties to divide the country or betray the Sinhala race and Buddhist religion as some extremist elements in Colombo claimed. The military victories gained in the North-East would only be a temporary one unless the President's political formula to the ethnic conflict were implemented, the minister said.

Ratwatte was speaking at a public meeting held at the Sri Sugatharama Vihara premises at Unantenne in Hanguranketa, central province recently. He was received by Youth Affairs, Sports and Rural Development Minister S. B. Dissanayake and Nuwara-Eliya District Member of Parliament C. B. Ratnayake.

The meeting was preceded by the opening of a fully equipped sub- post office at Unantenne, visiting the rural electrification scheme and the new shrine room of the Sugatharama Viharaya. The two ministers and the Member of Parliament offered the first Buddha pooja to the new Buddha statue.

All military high officials who were determined to wipe out the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were of the view that their military victories would be temporary ones and to make it a permanent victory and achieve everlasting peace, a political solution was a vital necessity, Ratwatte said.

The endeavour of the People's Alliance government was to achieve peace by preventing the emergence of any more Prabhakarans (LTTE leader) and terrorism in future and achieve peace by ensuring the legitimate rights of minorities in the country through democratic means and letting them live in peace and harmony without fear or suspicion. The political solution had been introduced by President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga with the objective of achieving that target, he said.

Ratwatte added that during the past 15 years the lives of 31,000 people of the country including 12,000 security personnel and 8,000 innocent civilians had been sacrificed due to the war.

Apart from that, several billions of public funds which could have been utilised to develop the country and solve in entirety the unemployment problem had been wasted and public and private properties worth billions had been destroyed. Military victories achieved by sacrificing all that was a temporary one. It could be made a permanent victory and everlasting peace could be achieved only by implementing the political solution and that was why they should face reality and approve the President's political solution, he said.

Some extremist elements in Colombo were claiming that the government was going to divide the country and betray the Sinhala race and Buddhist religion. But they never send their sons to the war front, Ratwatte said.

The minister said: "Sons of poor rural people in the country who were sacrificing their lives for that course. Ninety percent of those youths in the security forces were from areas like Central, Uva, North Central and the Wayamba provinces but not from Colombo or Kandy town. We have already won 70 percent of the war against the terrorists and the balance 30 percent too would be completed in due course thanks to the security forces.

"Those protesting against the political solution from Colombo are claiming that we are going to divide the country and betray the Sinhala race and Buddhist Religion. I challenge them to hand over to me their sons to the battlefields in the North and East. The entire Jaffna peninsula has now been taken over from the terrorist grip by security forces. Not even 100 bullets were used to complete "Riviresa" 3 operation. The terrorists ran away leaving their arms. Tigers in hiding were captured because the ordinary Tamil people who are frustrated and fed up with LTTE terrorists helped the security forces to get them."

It was necessary to maintain that goodwill of the Tamil people for ever to achieve victory in any operation, he said.

"Let those who shout continue their shouting. Let those who wanted to stage sathyagrahas do so. Let us implement the political solution to that we could create an atmosphere in the country for the future generations to live in peace and harmony without fear or suspicion in a free and united country. Let us face reality. Let us discuss the political solution openly and implement it without being misled by false propaganda campaigns carried out by extremist elements," the minister added. [passage omitted]

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